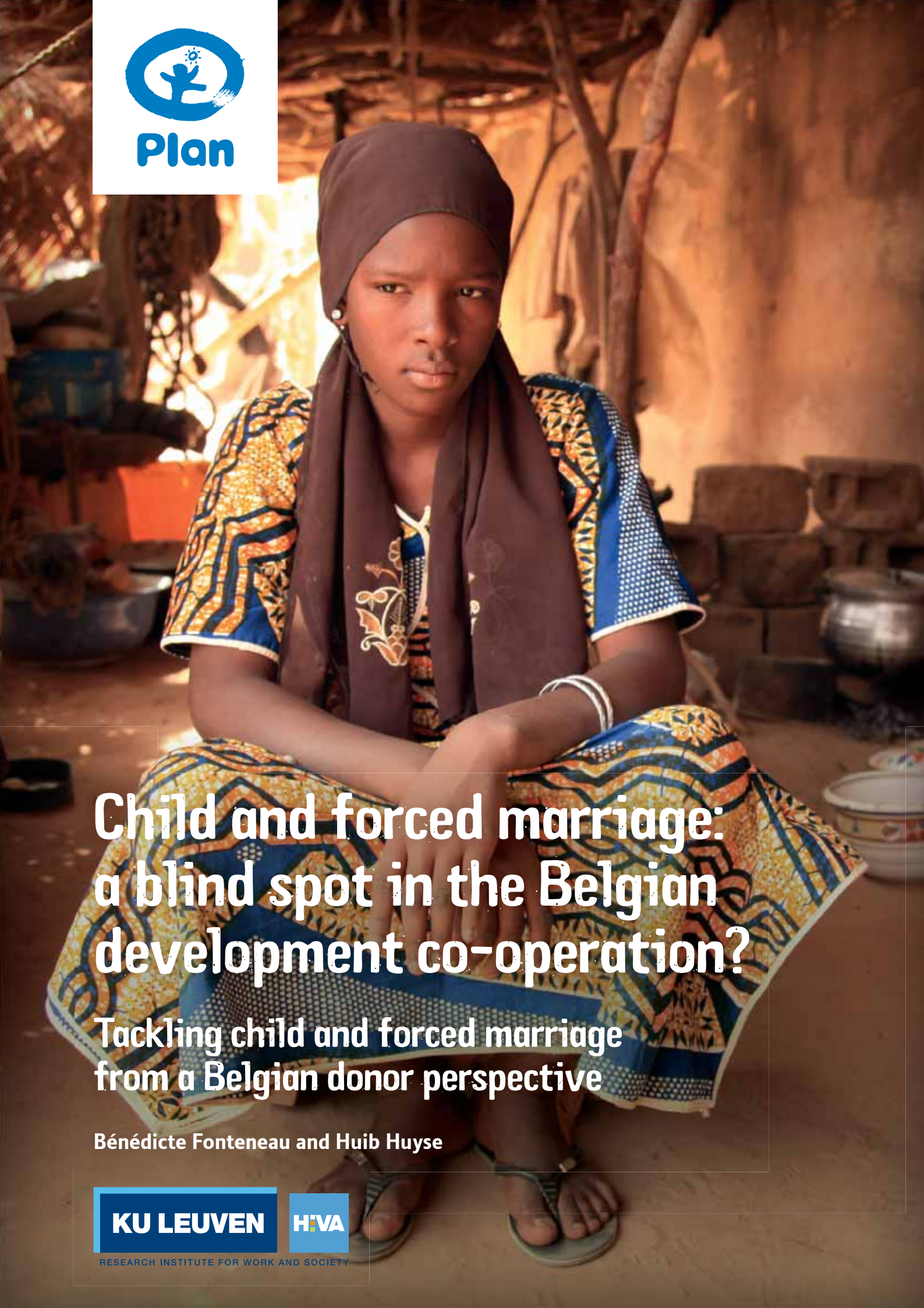

Child and forced marriage: a blind spot in the Belgian development co-operation?

Tackling child and forced marriage from a Belgian donor perspective

Bénédicte Fonteneau and Huib Huyse

KU LEUVEN HIVA
RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR WORK AND SOCIETY

Nasreen, Pakistan: "*I wanted to study, but my in-laws were insisting that I get married quickly. I was able to persuade my parents to let me continue my education instead of getting married.*"

© Photo: Plan

Credits

Authors:	Bénédicte Fonteneau and Huib Huyse KU Leuven - HIVA huib.huyse@kuleuven.be
Lay-out:	Brigid Sullivan
© Cover photo:	Plan
Printing:	Albe De Coker
Coordination:	Anthony Vanoverschelde and Margaux Fontaine

Brussels, 2014

Acknowledgments

This study was commissioned by Plan Belgium, and implemented under the supervision of Anthony Vanoverschelde. We are thankful for his constructive and professional support, providing guidance and useful insights and comments at different stages of the process. We also would like to express our deep appreciation to the persons who provided useful critiques and very valuable comments on drafts of this study: Lyric Thompson (Senior Policy Manager at the International Center for Research on Women, ICRW), Zara Rapoport (Advocacy Officer, Plan International UN Liaison Office, New York); Alex Munive (Global Girls Innovation Program Manager, Plan International), Adrienne Monteath-van Dok (Research Coordinator, Plan - International Headquarters) and other colleagues of the Plan Belgium head office in Brussels. All remaining errors and the opinions expressed in this report are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Foreword

You will most likely link Plan Belgium's policy work to primary education. That is because for many years our organization has advocated an 'education revival' in Belgian development through our 'All girls to school' campaign. Millions of girls in developing countries stop going to school when they exchange their wedding vows, which is something we just cannot ignore.

It is time for the Belgian development establishment to use its resources and networks to step up the fight against child and forced marriage. The development gain this could generate within a single generation is so great that, for Plan Belgium, doing nothing amounts to gross negligence.

In the majority of cases, girls are the victims of early marriage. They themselves experience it as forced marriage because, as minors, they do not really have any say in whether, when and with whom they marry. Just like boys, girls should have the right to finish their education by completing first primary then secondary school. If they do, the likelihood that they will marry early is almost zero and the probability that they will earn a decent income that allows them to be independent will increase exponentially.

On the eve of a new legislature it is only fitting to return to the debate on ambitions and priorities. This report is intended to open the debate on how the Belgian development actors – including the global diplomatic corps – can and should oppose this flagrant violation of children's rights.

In the conviction that stepping up the fight against child and forced marriages is not only a very necessary but also a very sensible policy option, I hope this report gives you plenty of food for thought.

Dirk Van Maele
National Director
Plan Belgium

Contents

Schoolgirl Senzeni, 18, Zambia, with her three-week-old daughter. *"Without the support of my husband's family, I would not have been able to return to school."*

List of Acronyms

BRAC	Bangladeshi Rural Advancement Committee
BTC	Belgian Development Agency
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of Children
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DGD	Directorate of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (Belgian Ministry responsible for development cooperation)
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
DR Congo	Democratic Republic of Congo
EU	European Union
FGM	Female Genital Mutilations
ICP	Indicative Cooperation Programme
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
ITM	Institute for Tropical Medicine
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Summary

Child and forced marriage (child marriage) is defined as a marriage in which one of the spouses is married before the age of 18. The term marriage is used in a broad sense, including cohabitation, betrothal or conjugal union between two people recognized under civil law, religious law and/or customary rites.

Worldwide, 27 girls below the age of 18 are forced into marriage every minute. The majority of them live in Sub-Saharan Africa (especially Western Africa) and South Asia. They are generally poorly educated and live in extremely poor families in rural areas. The figures and studies show that child marriage has disastrous effects on the girls and on society as a whole. In spite of this, for several decades the international donor community has remained largely silent on this issue.

This silence is now gradually being broken, thanks mainly to the efforts of activists and civil society actors around the world. At international level, tackling child marriage has finally been put on the agenda, principally by the United Nations and specialized international NGOs.

This report proposes addressing the issue of child and forced marriage from a Belgian perspective with two goals:

1) Raising awareness in the Belgian development community of the severity of the problem, focusing on Belgium's partner countries;

2) Identifying windows of opportunity for Belgium to support governments and civil society actors in these partner countries to prevent child marriage and mitigate its effects.

A sensitive and complex problem

By way of introduction, the report analyses the issue of child marriage through three specific lenses: human rights, gender-based violence and social norms. This is important, because it provides entry points for preventing and tackling this problem. It also helps generate an understanding of how the various actors experience or interpret child marriage and why it is so difficult to change the practice.

The analysis shows that a wide range of human rights policy instruments and legal frameworks already exist and that these texts are vital to efforts to tackle this practice. However, they only become fully effective when combined with other interventions to make the environment more conducive to sustainable changes to social norms and practices that underpin child marriage.

The analysis of gender-based violence and social norms provides insights into the underlying reasons for the persistence of this practice. Studies clearly show that changing the behavior of families and communities in this area rests on a complex mixture of beliefs and norms (patriarchal society, gender inequality) that are particularly difficult to influence, especially because the social and economic conditions of the families help perpetuate this practice. In tackling child marriage, all of these parameters need to be considered.

The geography of child marriage

Child marriage is a worldwide phenomenon. The most recent statistics estimate that, every minute, 27 girls are married before the age of 18 – one in nine of them before the age of 15. The highest prevalence of child marriage (above 30%) is found in Western and Sub-Saharan Africa. Almost 50% of girls affected by child marriage live in South Asia.

Seven out of Belgium's eighteen partner countries have a prevalence of child marriage above 30%: Niger (75%), Mali (55%), Mozambique (52%), Uganda (46%), RD Congo (39%), Tanzania (37%) and Benin (34%). The report examines two of Belgium's partner countries in a little more detail:

- Niger, because of its notoriously high prevalence rate
- DR Congo, because it is the partner country receiving far and away the biggest share of the Belgian cooperation budget.

These two cases show how important it is to understand the dynamics behind the statistics in each country in order to adopt tailored strategies to tackle child marriage.

> "70,000 adolescent deaths result annually from complications from pregnancy, childbirth."
>
> (UNFPA, 2012)

Haoua, 13 years old, Niger. "*I was married off when I was 9 years old, and forced to move in with my husband when I was 11. He wanted to do things with me that I didn't want to do. Thanks to Plan's conciliation, our families agreed to annul the marriage. I'm back at school now, which I'm very happy about.*"

© Photo: Lisa Deveitere

Experience-based success factors

Considering the extent and the dramatic impact of child marriage on girls' lives, it is surprising that it is the primary focus of very few interventions. Most of the programs are oriented to education, gender and reproductive health. However, they are often not sufficiently differentiated and therefore lack a specific focus on child marriage, which to some extent is explained by a lack of experience, human and financial resources, and especially specific knowledge of the subject in each intervention context.

By integrating the lessons of interventions in Africa and Asia in particular, this report identifies the action models for development cooperation actors. While bringing about social change in the area of child marriage is difficult, the international community must not be deterred from taking action. The study takes up the key success factors as well as the challenges:

- Intensifying local, national and regional advocacy by supporting strategic and influential multi-actor alliances.
- Integrating the fight against harmful social practices into interventions related to education, health care and poverty alleviation to tackle other structural or socioeconomic drivers of child marriage as quickly as possible.
- Developing general sector approaches (involving different levels of intervention in the same sector) and facilitating intersector interventions.
- Combining economic empowerment measures for girls, families and communities with support for economic policies that can have a long-term influence on the drivers of discrimination, inequality and vulnerability that underpin child marriage.
- Adapting intervention strategies in fragile and conflict regions by combining efforts to tackle gender-based violence in conflict situations and the fight against child marriage.
- Adopting innovative approaches to monitor and evaluate initiatives to tackle child marriage, especially in terms of changing social behavior and norms.

Belgian aid and child marriage: recommendations

The international donor community is increasingly, albeit hesitantly, responding to this crisis. The issue of child marriage is increasingly gaining in importance in UN treaties, conventions, declarations, resolutions and reports. So far, the topic of child and forced marriage has only to a limited degree been addressed by Belgian development agencies. This study examines a number of structural opportunities for a stronger engagement with this challenge for the Belgian aid system.

1. **Strengthening the knowledge base on child marriage**

   The Belgian development cooperation operates in countries with a high prevalence of child marriage, but the Belgian development community and other stakeholders (direct bilateral actors, NGOs) have little insights into this problem. The knowledge base could be strengthened by a set of original awareness-raising and training activities for a group of practitioners and policymakers in areas with direct ties to child marriage, beginning with health, agriculture and education.

2. **Integrating child marriage in the high-level Indicative Cooperation program discussions**

   Child marriage is not a policy priority in any of the ongoing programs in the seven high-prevalence partner countries. However, several existing and imminent United Nations documents can provide a good framework for bilateral discussions between Belgium and its partner countries. In addition, public positions taken by partner countries (such as Niger) against child marriage could be the starting point for dialogue aimed at integrating this dimension into negotiations on Indicative Cooperation Programs.

3. **Putting child and forced marriage on the Post-2015 Agenda**

   The current discussions on the Post-2015 Agenda are a good opportunity to harness the new momentum around child marriage to establish a common development agenda. Belgium can play a fundamental role in achieving this goal by helping ensure long-term funding for development.

4. **Reviving the Belgian gender strategies for child marriage**

   In recent years Belgium has initiated a range of gender mainstreaming policies and strategies, but these efforts have not fully and substantially contributed to gender equality. A lack of practical expertise appears to be the reason. By means of targeted investments, Belgium could acquire this expertise, develop and document a number of pedagogical case studies and initiate research to study specific aspects of child marriage. This would enable the exploration of the missed opportunities in new and existing programs and generate a new momentum for gender-related work in Belgian cooperation.

5. **Making child marriage an overriding concern in selected Belgian partner countries**

   Besides gender, various Belgian development cooperation policy priorities (children's rights, social protection, decent work) provide especially relevant opportunities with regard to child marriage, especially from a preventive point of view. It would make sense to include this challenge in the upcoming 'common context analyses' for NGOs working in the South.

6. **Designing programs addressing child and forced marriage**

   The approaches that can be chosen to tackle child marriage may be direct (focusing specifically in child marriage) or indirect (through education, by supporting economic activities or health care, for instance). In both cases, to be effective the intervention logic or the change theory must explicitly show how they help tackle child marriage.

7. **Laying the foundations for a truly multi-sector and multi-actor approach**

   Some of the most promising ways of tackling child marriage are at the interface of different sectors, such as health and education or education and employment. Belgium could facilitate exchanges between experts in these sectors and drive certain interventions to gradually expand the knowledge base. Child marriage also offers increased possibilities for synergies between different actors and international cooperation arrangements, which enables effective partnerships between local and Belgian actors.

8. **Working with the latest insights in social norms to achieve sustainable change**

   Changing social norms and behavior with regard to child marriage is a complex task, because it depends on individual behavior, shared knowledge and a combination of the two. In-depth knowledge of these aspects is required to design and implement effective approaches to help change these harmful social practices.

9. **Responding to the child marriage problem in DR Congo**

   First and foremost, there are big gaps in knowledge about child marriage in RD Congo, which needs to be improved (database, drivers, trends, conceivable solutions). Then, appropriate responses need to be developed that take account of the fragility of the country at various levels, including its complex relationships with neighboring countries. As a major donor in DR Congo in relevant areas such as education, agriculture and health, Belgium could consider lobbying for a more proactive approach to end child marriage in DR Congo.

10. **Introducing child and forced marriage in the partnership with Niger**

    In a country like Niger, where three in every four girls are married before the age of 18 there is an urgent need to tackle this harmful practice. Belgium could play various roles in this:

    a) Helping fill the big gap in knowledge on child marriage in Niger;

    b) Strengthening the advocacy efforts and the strategies of civil society actors;

    c) Exploring the integration of actions to tackle child marriage into the current set of Belgian intervention sectors and in the support strategies for Nigerian institutions and ministries.

Afroza, 17 years old, Bangladesh, gave birth to twins. The delivery was very painful and difficult. She struggles as a young mother and has difficulty in breastfeeding her children. "*I feel inadequate as a mother. I cannot provide enough for my babies.*"

1. Introduction

Child and forced marriage is defined as a marriage in which one or both spouses is married before the age of 18. The term marriage is used in a broad sense, including cohabitation, betrothal or union between two people recognized under civil law, religious law and/or customary rites (see Box 1).

Worldwide, about one in three girls are forced to marry before she turns 18. According to the UNFPA (2012), if nothing is done 142 million girls under the age of 18 will be married by the end the decade. This practice constitutes a violation of fundamental human rights and is a form of gender-based violence, as well as discrimination. The violation of being married too early is not limited to the psychological effect of not being allowed to decide whether, when and with whom to marry. It often means being locked into marriage with an older man (Jensen & Thornton, 2003), having to live and perform all the duties of a wife, while being a child or adolescent. When a girl is married during her childhood or her adolescence, she faces severe medical risks due to being forced into sexual intercourse at too young an age, as well as often multiple, unwanted pregnancies and births when her body is not physically ready for it. For a girl, being married also means being deprived of her right to education, emancipation, and the right to lead a full and balanced life.

For several decades the international donor community has been largely silent on this issue despite the growing insights, provided by researchers, child protection and women's organizations, into the damaging effects on girls and society as a whole. To a certain extent, the long silence reflects both the taboo on child marriage that exists in many affected countries, and the hesitation and uneasiness felt by members of the international donor community to address this sensitive and complex issue. The issue is sensitive because it is often seen as a private family affair, embedded in social norms and rarely discussed in public outside of the community. But child and forced marriage is also a complex issue, shaped by multiple social and economic factors that cannot be easily influenced if not tackled systematically at all levels.

The silence is now gradually being broken thanks to the efforts of activists and civil society actors around the world. At the International level, child and forced marriage was finally forced onto the agenda, principally by UN organizations and specialized international NGOs. Several development agencies and donor governments have condemned this practice and have announced plans to explore how this issue could be more explicitly addressed and supported.

Seven of the 18 Belgian partner countries[1] are highly affected by child and forced marriage (Niger, Mali, Mozambique, Uganda, DR Congo, Tanzania, and Benin). Of them, Niger has the highest rate of child marriage in the world: 75% of the girls are married before the age of 18 and 36% before the age of 15. Unfortunately, beyond these basic statistics, the practice is rather poorly documented and is low on the agenda of the donor community, including Belgium. In DR Congo, almost one in four girls are affected nationally and up to 50% of girls in provinces such as Katanga, Kasai Oriental or Equateur. Despite the great attention given by the international community to gender-based violence in DR Congo, the specific issue of child and forced marriage is hardly discussed at the national level, and is not on the radar of donors, let alone addressed in interventions. How can we start thinking about ways to contribute to eliminating this harmful practice in countries like DR Congo?

This report proposes addressing the issue of child and forced marriage from a Belgian perspective with a dual purpose: first, to raise awareness in the Belgian development community of how serious this issue is, also in key Belgian partner countries. Secondly, while taking into account the complexity of the issue, to identify windows of opportunity for Belgium to support governments and civil society actors to mitigate the harmful effects of child and forced marriage in the short and medium term, and eliminate it in the longer term.

The report is split into five chapters. In chapter 2 the issue is examined through three lenses: human rights principles, specific social norms that drive this issue, and the gender-based violence effects of child and forced marriage. Chapter 3 provides a geographic overview of the practice with special attention for the Belgium partner countries, with Niger and DR Congo used as case studies throughout the subsequent chapters. In chapter 4 we take a closer look to what has been learned from interventions with regard to child marriage. Lastly, the report explores this issue from a Belgian donor perspective, including suggesting different policy options for how Belgium could play a more significant role, taking into account existing development policy priorities and the expertise of Belgian actors.

1 In June 2014, the 18 Belgian partner countries were: Algeria, Benin, Bolivia, Burundi, DR Congo, Ecuador, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Palestinian Territory, Peru, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Vietnam. Partner countries are selected on criteria related to poverty level, good governance and Belgium's potential for providing meaningful support (http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/policy/development_cooperation/countries/partner_countries/).

Mariama, 13, Niger, was discovered by Plan four days before her marriage to an older man. Plan worked with local authorities to have the marriage cancelled and Mariama is now back at school.

2. Three lenses to understanding child and forced marriage

The issue of child and forced marriage is approached in this chapter through three specific lenses: legal and human rights, gender-based violence and social norms.

Exploring different ways of looking at early and child marriage is important because it provides rich entry points for preventing and tackling this problem. Multiple frames of analysis are also needed to get an in-depth understanding of how different actors at different levels experience and/or interpret child and forced marriage, and why it is so difficult to change this practice.

The legal lens surveys the relevant international frameworks that prohibit child and forced marriage. The gender-based violence lens highlights the consequences of child and forced marriage, while the social norms lens puts the emphasis on the causes of the practice and the mechanisms of its perpetuation.

2.1. A human rights lens

Various international and regional conventions or treaties contain clauses related to child and forced marriage, such as those dealing with human and economic rights, social and cultural rights, abolition of slavery or slavery-like practices, and discrimination against women. These legal and human rights instruments provide a clear framework within which a marriage is acceptable. They refer to the age of marriage and to the requirement of free and full consent by both spouses. While the instruments and frameworks are continuously developing, several reports have identified a substantial implementation gap.

As early as 1948 **the Universal Declaration on Human Rights** stated that marriage should only take place with the free and full consent of intending spouses of full age, but did so without determining a minimum age. The 1962 **Convention on Consent, Minimum Age of Marriage and Registration of Marriages** stated that state parties to the convention should ratify legislation to specify a minimum age for marriage (art. 2), but the convention does not define what "full age" exactly entails. In 1989, the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** went a step further by declaring that every human being below the age of eighteen years is considered as a child. This convention does not explicitly mention child marriage but the UN Committee on ›

Box 1: Child marriage: definition and terminology issues

Child marriage is defined as marriage in which one or both spouses is married before the age of 18. The term marriage is used in a broad sense, including cohabitation, betrothal or union between two people recognized under civil law, religious law and/or customary rites. Whatever the rites, this kind of betrothal is understood to be binding by the spouses concerned, their families and the wider community, whether or not it has been formally registered in law (Turner, 2013).

There is some discussion about the relevant terms to be used to describe the issue of persons (girls in the great majority of cases) married before the age of 18. The term child marriage is the most obvious choice if one refers to existing international legislation, which defines a child as a person under 18. However, this term can lead to some confusion depending on how childhood is contextually defined by the law (such as in the USA where some states have different definitions) or by the customary norm (e.g. girls becoming adult from the date of their first menstruation). This is why many organizations prefer to refer to child and forced marriage. This qualification stresses the inappropriate or illegal character of the marriage by reference to personal and biological development as by reference to the law. The forced character of a marriage is not exclusive to child marriage but it underlines that no full and informed consent can be expected from persons not having the maturity to give it and subjected as a consequence to emotional and/or physical duress.

The UN Convention adopted in September 2013 on this issue uses the comprehensive term "child, early and forced marriage". For readability reasons, we have chosen in this report to mostly refer to the term "child and forced marriage". The added value of this term is that it emphasizes the child aspect (a person under 18 years of age) and the forced nature of any union that involves a person under 18.

© Photo: Plan

Plan Bangladesh supports children's organizations that work with local government, community-based organizations and others in the community to create child marriage-free zones and prevent early marriages.

the Rights of the Child, which was given the remit to monitor the implementation of the convention, has stated that "the minimum age for marriage should be 18 years for both man and woman" and that "the betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory"[2].

To date, 193 countries have ratified the convention with the notable exception of Somalia and the United States of America. Regional treaties also contain references to the age of marriage. For instance, article 6 of the **Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa** (2003) to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, known as the Maputo Protocol, is clear in affirming that "the minimum age of marriage for women shall be 18 years". In an article (21) addressing harmful social and cultural practices, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1989) prohibits child marriage and betrothal of girls and boys and recommends that effective action, including legislation, should be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years and make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory (art 21:2).

The free and full consent of both spouses is mentioned in almost all international or regional treaties addressing marriage related issues. According to the UN 1962 Convention[3], full consent of the spouses has to be expressed by them in person after due publicity and in the presence of the authority competent to solemnize the marriage and of witnesses, as prescribed by law. The 1979 **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW)[4] uses the clearest and strongest language on this issue: "the betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory". The convention explicitly stipulates: "women shall have the same right as men to freely choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent." However, many countries allow an exception with parental or other consent or for customary law. And, as will be described in the next paragraph, the consent notion is fairly problematic.

Countries have the obligation to incorporate the convention's engagements into enforceable national legislation. However, several studies reveal that, with some notable exceptions, this often does not happen. Policymakers at the national level rarely perceive child and forced marriage as a priority; enforcing these laws involves costs and efforts. For example, resources are required to train and raise awareness among civil servants and elected authorities, and to establish monitoring systems. In addition, it is particularly difficult to enforce laws on child and forced marriage in countries like Niger, DR Congo or Bangladesh that have established plural marriage systems (customary, religious, official), but which do not systematically register the different forms of marriage. While some countries are making progress in terms of complying with the international human rights framework on child and forced marriage, in other countries there is a danger progress already achieved will be reversed. The current discussion[5] in Iraq on a new law proposing to legalize the marriage of girls aged 9 years and above shows that earlier gains regarding the legal framework at national level should not be taken for granted. The

2 General Recommendation of the Committee General Recommendation No. 21 (13th session, 1994 on Equality in Marriage and Family Relations)
3 The UN Convention on Consent, Minimum Age of Marriage and Registration of Marriages, 1962
4 The CEDAW has been ratified by 187 countries (not including, Iran, Palau, Somalia, Sudan, Tonga and the United States) (Equality Now, 2014)
5 At the time of writing, the final decision on this new Iraqi law was not known. Several observers conclude that it has little chance of passing but should be seen as a political stunt by some political parties to impose what they present as "religious" principles as a basis for new legislation (Salman, 2014).

situation tends to be dynamic with many different forces trying to change the status quo if there is no broad support among the general public and influential groups in society for strong regulation around early marriage.

2.2. A gender-based violence lens

The **UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women** defines gender-based violence as any act 'that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life". From a quantitative point of view, child marriage affects girls disproportionately more than boys. 'Girls Not Brides' notes that the proportion of young women aged 15-18 who were betrothed in 2003 to young men aged 15-18 (and married in the same year) found this ratio to be 72:1 in Mali and 6:1 in El Salvador.

As stated above, married girls face many forms of physical and psychological violence. Being married at a young age leads to higher risks related to pregnancy and sexual relations: unsafe abortion, maternal death, obstetric fistula[6], sexually transmitted infections, HIV, etc. In 2013, the UNFPA State of World Population report highlighted the critical level and impact of adolescent pregnancy in developing countries, with around 20,000 girls giving birth every day, 70,000 adolescents dying annually from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth, and 3.2 million unsafe abortions being performed every year. In fact, early pregnancy is the leading cause of death among girls aged 15-19 years (UNFPA 2014). Child brides also face a higher risk of contracting HIV because they are often married to older men with a longer history of sexual activity. Along the same lines, these statistics reveal that girls aged 15 to 19 in sub-Saharan Africa are between two and six times more likely to contract HIV than boys of the same age. Early marriage also has a direct impact on newborns. In a country like Niger, where three girls in four are married before turning 18, the neonatal mortality rate is twice as high as the average for infants whose mother is younger than 20 years old (INS-Niger & UNICEF, 2014). In addition, research by ICRW observed a link between child marriage and domestic violence in various countries (India, Peru, Kenya). Girls who marry before their 18th birthday are more likely to experience domestic violence than their peers who marry later. Moreover, compared to other women, these young married adolescents tend to believe that a man is always "justified" in beating his wife (Malhotra et al., 2011).

Child and forced marriage can in many ways be equated with female slavery because of the conditions of marriage: abductions of girls to become wives during conflicts and in peacetime, lack of consent (free, full and informed), inability to leave or end marriage, financial transactions or payment in kind, and child trafficking (Turner, 2013, p. 20). They often have little or no control over their bodies, when and if they have sex, bear children or even leave the home. As the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery (2012) states, child marriage can be seen as a servile marriage in which girls are submitted to domestic servitude and sexual slavery).

Child and forced marriage also translates as psychological violence. The lack of full consent to marry or to have sexual intercourse with a person of your choosing constitutes an obvious form of psychological violence: "one day, they are under parents' authority, the next day, they are under a partner's or husband's authority, perpetuating and reinforcing a cycle of gender inequality, dependence and powerlessness" (UNFPA, 2013, p. 24). As a consequence, adolescence, a critical transition and development phase, is not recognized in high-prevalence countries as a specific period that requires protection and specific guidance.

6 The WHO defines obstetric fistula as a hole in the birth canal caused by obstructed labor. Women suffering from this have constant urinary incontinence which often leads to social isolation, skin infections, kidney disorder and even death if left untreated (http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/obstetric_fistula/facts/en/index1.html).

Box 2: Education: one of the most important factors in delaying the marriage of girls

Education and child and forced marriage are closely intertwined. At the global level, the highest rates of child marriage are found in regions where a large proportion of girls do not go to school. And at country level, girls with little or no education make up the great majority of girls married before 18 (UNFPA, 2013): 63% of married girls (under 18) have no education. Estimates show that each year of marriage before adulthood reduces a girl's literacy by 5.6 percentage points (UNGEI, 2013). Marriage and pregnancy have been identified as among the key factors forcing girls to leave school: a Plan study in West Africa in 2012 revealed that 33 per cent of children surveyed in Senegal and 25 per cent of children in Mali identified marriage as a key factor in girls leaving school (Plan Waro, 2012).

Child and forced marriage often means the end of education for girls. This again limits their emancipation, their opportunities to develop social connections, and their economic prospects. Married girls are perceived to have chosen to prioritize their role of mother, wife and caregiver. Sending them to school is viewed as a waste of money rather than an investment in their future. Married or pregnant girls are often unable to remain or return to school by law or prejudice and the fear that their presence will disturb the normal functioning of the school.

Education plays a determining role in the elimination of child marriage. As Davies et al. (2012, p. 32) state: "Women with more education generally marry later and have fewer children during their teenage years, particularly if they reach secondary school. Education also helps girls to have more autonomy in choosing a partner and to make free and informed decisions about marriage and sexual and reproductive health".

Senzeni was married at a young age and fell pregnant early. "*As girls here in Zambia, we need more much information about contraception.*"

Child Marriage in South Kivu

In its report (Turner, 2013) on forced marriage in Congo, the NGO Free the Slaves cites the example of the leader of a women's rights organization in the Fizi area of South Kivu province. She works with communities to prevent sexual violence against young girls. The women's rights activist explains how traditional customs dominate life in Fizi, despite a 2006 law that criminalizes child marriage. She stresses the importance of raising awareness in the village communities, especially by focusing on how early marriage harms a child. Early marriage tends to be more frequent among financially desperate families. Because of poverty, a father might give his daughter away, just to have one less mouth to feed.

Source: Turner, 2013

2.3. A social and economy lens: child and forced marriage embedded in social norms and reinforced by socio-economic factors

The first two lenses show marriage of the girl-child in a negative way, as a human rights violation and an act of gender-based violence. However, this is not necessarily how the individuals and communities who perpetuate it perceive the practice. Walker (2013), for example, noted the resistance of adults in West Africa to viewing early marriage as a problem. For them, the practice is a social norm that they have always known and approved in their social environment. In this context, social norms should be understood as "patterns of behavior motivated by a desire to conform to the shared social expectations of an important reference group" (Heise, 2013; cited by Marcus, 2014, p. 5). The reference group may be made up of a loose collection of individuals sharing common characteristics (ethnicity, religion). These norms around early marriage are particularly resistant to change because they are deeply rooted in patriarchal and male domination, which also explains why girls are mainly the victims. In this frame of thinking, marrying a young girl is a way of teaching her what is deemed "appropriate" behavior, and forces her into attitudes of care and service towards men (UNICEF, 2001).

People tend to comply with these social norms for two main reasons. First of all, they want to avoid the sanctions associated with postponing marriage (social disapproval, effective exclusion from the group, economic sanctions). Secondly, they expect to be rewarded for their compliance in social and economic terms (Marcus, 2014). Moreover, people do not always perceive compliance with the norm as a decision they take but rather as a natural or religious rule that they cannot possibly flout. Such processes are strengthened by the fact that speaking explicitly about sexuality or intimacy-related issues is taboo. In many circumstances, girls will refrain from questioning or expressing fear or doubts about this norm. And if they do say something, they might not be listened to because few family members will feel comfortable acting on her questions or fears. In other cases, girls try to run away from home to avoid the marriage, which in turn exposes them to major risks of abuse.

In many societies, marrying a girl is seen as a positive way of protecting the girl and her family. It is supposed to prevent premarital sex or pregnancies out of marriage and avoid the associated dishonor. Following the same logic, some parents withdraw girls from school from the age of their first menstruation because they fear that they will be particularly vulnerable due to the presence of males (pupils and teachers). Parents, especially when they are poor, force their daughters to marry in the hope of securing them a good future by providing them with the protection of a husband.

In almost all societies, marriage also has economic dimensions. The persistence of discriminatory social norms cannot be understood without considering the (short-term) economic logic. They are part of the coping strategies households have developed to prevent or respond to social and economic shocks. By marrying off a daughter a person has one less mouth to feed in the family (see box) and the prospect of lots of children and grandchildren to support the family. Promising a girl to another family can be linked with land or property issues and dowry or bride price systems (payable in cash or in kind) can be an important short-term incentive, particularly for families in poverty. In other cases, marrying out a daughter will be used to pay the family's debts.

Addressing child and forced marriage from the perspective of social norms is important because it offers the opportunity to take into account and start deconstructing the multiple underlying rationales (gender inequality, power relations and strong dependence on other community members in the absence of other social protection systems) used by families, communities or authorities to justify the practice. To support these dynamics of social change, it is helpful to consider the factors that drive compliance with a social norm: fear of reprisal, fear of being cast out of the community, and lack of knowledge of other ways of acting or behaving. In addition, people subjected to these norms will often assume that other members of the community support and respect the norms when in fact they do not (Mackie & Lejeune, 2009).

2.4. Combining the three lenses

The three lenses described above provide insights into the complex factors involved in tackling child and forced marriage. This analysis shows that a comprehensive set of international and national human rights policy instruments and legal frameworks is required, but more is needed to enforce the necessary change in behavior and social norms. In this right-based approach, inclusion, non-discrimination and equity can be promoted. Laws and other legal instruments and policies can make a big difference, but they will only be fully effective if they are combined with other interventions to make the enabling environment more conducive to a sustainable change in social norms and practices. Both the gender-based violence frame of analysis and the social norms lens provide insights into the underlying reasons for the persistence of this practice. Studies increasingly show that changing the behavior of families and communities in this area is a complex task because it is formed by a mixture of beliefs, compliance to norms and lack of information regarding alternatives. Gender stereotypes tend to perpetuate women's lower status and the corresponding patriarchal system, which tends to be deeply embedded in most societies, is particularly difficult to roll back. But the targeted change in attitude and perception is also influenced by the social and economic living conditions of the families.

However, chapter 4 will show that change can be achieved. Considering the variety of actors involved, together with the underlying power, social and economic dimensions, and the required policy, institutional and legal changes, it is clear that addressing child and forced marriage requires multi-level, contextualized efforts over the long term.

3. The geography of child and forced marriage: what about the partner countries of Belgium?

This chapter presents a geographical overview of the countries and regions particularly affected by child and forced marriage. A short overview at the global level is followed by an analysis of the situation in those Belgian partner countries that have a particular high prevalence of child and forced marriage.

An important observation here is the difficulty of measuring the occurrence of child and forced marriage. Official registration of marriage does not occur systematically. In the case of informal unions, registration does not occur or, in some cases, it occurs only at a local level by the traditional or religious authorities. The absence of birth certificates in high-prevalence countries further complicates the process of proving that girls are victims of child marriage.

In the absence of reliable registration data, existing statistics mainly rely on demographic and health surveys. Two key indicators[7] are used to measure child marriage: the percentage of women aged 20-24 who are married before the age of 18 and the percentage of women aged 20-24 married or in union before the age of 15 (UNICEF, 2013)[8].

3.1. Overview at global level

Child and forced marriage is a worldwide phenomenon. The most recent statistics estimate that one third of the world's girls are married before the age of 18, and one in nine are married before the age of 15. According to extrapolations by UNFPA (2012), if current levels of child marriages are maintained, 14.2 million girls annually or 39,000 daily will marry before the age of 18.

The table on the following page shows that countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage (above 30%) are concentrated in Western and Sub-Saharan Africa. But if we take population size into account, approximately 50% of girls affected by child marriage live in South Asia, including India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Nepal. The table also shows that girls mostly affected by child and forced marriage live in rural areas. They have a low level of education and belong to households characterized by a high level of poverty.

While there are statistics for some periods, they often do not cover longer periods of time or are not repeated at regular intervals. This makes it difficult to identify trends in child marriage. However, importantly, the available data for countries that have conducted two or more consecutive household surveys, suggests that little overall progress has been made in reducing rates of child marriage globally (UNFPA, 2012).

7 The figures in this report were compiled by UNFPA based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and other national surveys. They refer to the most recent year available between 2000 and 2011.

8 According to World Bank economists Nguyen & Wodon (2012, p. 399), the current method of measuring child marriage is relatively unsophisticated. They say more robust analysis is needed to take into account how young girls marry in order to allow the comparison of child marriage between countries, between groups within countries and between time periods with respect to the age threshold used to identify child marriage.

Table 1: 25 countries with the highest rates of child marriage, with background characteristics for 2000-2011

Country	% of women 20-24 years old who were married or in a union by the age of 18			% of women 20-24 years old who were married or in a union by the age of 18, by education level (%)			% of women 20-24 years old who were married or in a union by the age of 18, by household wealth (%)		Source
	Total	Rural	Urban	No Education	Primary	Secondary or Higher	Poorest 20%	Richest 20%	
Niger	74.5	83.5	42.1	81.2	62.7	17.2	80.5	47.5	DHS 2006
Chad	71.5	73.9	65.4	78.3	67.1	37.0	67.3	66.2	DHS 2004
Bangladesh	66.2	70.3	53.3	82.0	80.4	57.2	83.2	46.3	DHS 2007
Guinea	63.1	74.9	44.5	72.7	47.9	27.3	78.9	45.7	DHS 2005
Central African Republic	60.6	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	MICS 2006
Mali	55.0	76.5	60.4	77.0	64.3	37.9	72.6	57.7	MICS 2010
Mozambique	51.8	65.5	40.6	67.2	56.6	11.5	63.8	32.1	MICS 2008
Malawi	49.6	54.4	31.0	65.6	62.2	16.4	59.8	25.7	DHS 2010
Burkina Faso	47.8	61.2	26.8	59.8	41.5	3.0	60.6	25.6	MICS 2006
Madagascar	48.2	51.0	35.4	67.9	52.9	27.6	65.4	31.9	DHS 2008-09
Sierra Leone	47.9	61.1	30.4	64.2	51.8	12.1	61.8	23.1	DHS 2008
Eritrea	47.0	59.8	30.5	64.1	53.3	12.0	46.4	20.6	DHS 2002
India	47.4	56.2	29.3	76.5	61.8	27.2	75.3	16.3	NFHS 2005-06
Uganda	46.3	51.8	26.9	66.8	58.4	13.8	61.8	26.3	DHS 2006
Somalia	45.3	52.4	35.2	51.7	41.0	11.2	43.7	27.9	MICS 2006
Nicaragua	40.6	55.1	36.4	69.1	62.5	25.2	–	–	ENDESA 2006-07
Zambia	41.6	53.3	26.2	64.8	57.5	17.1	63.2	13.0	DHS 2007
Ethiopia	41.2	49.0	21.7	62.9	37.5	10.3	59.2	22.0	DHS 2011
Nepal	40.7	42.9	26.9	71.7	56.7	22.9	61.8	17.0	DHS 2011
Dominican Republic	39.6	50.1	35.6	56.4	75.3	27.5	64.2	21.2	DHS 2007
Afghanistan	39.0	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	NRVA 2007/2008
DR Congo	39.0	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Honduras	38.8	32.5	45.8	62.9	51.4	18.9	52.2	19.3	DHS 2005-06
Nigeria	39.4	49.8	21.6	82.1	53.8	12.5	70.8	10.6	DHS 2008
Liberia	37.9	48.6	24.9	56.3	42.3	17.3	56.9	17.7	DHS 2007

Data obtained from the UNFPA database using household surveys completed between 2000 and 2010 (DHS and MICS) and the UNICEF database (www.childinfo.org)
Source: UNFPA, 2012

Table 2: Countries showing a decline in the rate of child marriage by region
Results from two consecutive household surveys (MICS and DHS) in 48 countries

Region	Countries showing a significant* decline in rates of child marriage
Sub-Saharan Africa	Benin (U), Cameroon (U), Congo (R), Ethiopia, Lesotho, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zimbabwe (R)
Arab states	Jordan (R)
East Asia and The Pacific	Indonesia (R), Philippines (U)
South Asia	Bangladesh (U), Nepal
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Armenia
Latin America and the Caribbean	Bolivia, Guyana (R)

* Measured as changes of 10% or more in the prevalence of child marriage between the two surveys
(U) Changes observed in urban areas only
(R) Changes observed in rural areas only

Source: UNFPA, 2012, p. 24

Table 3: Belgian Partner countries with a prevalence of child and forced marriage above 30%

	Niger	Mali	Mozambique	Uganda	DR Congo	Tanzania	Benin
Prevalence of child marriage* as %	75%	55%	52%	46%	39%	37%	34%
Prevalence of child marriage before 15 years* as %	36%	15%	21%	10%	9%	7%	8%
Legal age of marriage**	Boys: 18 years Girls: 15 years	Boys: 21 years Girls: 18 years (15 years with parental consent)	Boys and girls: 18 years (16 years with parental consent)	Boys and girls: 18 years Girls with parental consent: 16 years	Boys: 18 years Girls: 15 years	Boys: 18 years Girls: 15 years	18 years
Age of sexual consent**	Below 15 years	15 years	16 years	18 years	18 years	Girls: 14 years	18 years

* UNFPA, 2012

** **Source:** Africa Child Policy Forum, The African Report of Child Wellbeing, 2013, towards a greater accountability to Africa's' Children

3.2. Child and forced marriage in Belgian partner countries

Of the 18 partner countries of the Belgian development cooperation, seven have a prevalence of child marriage above 30%: Niger, Mali, Mozambique, Uganda, RD Congo, Tanzania and Benin. The table below shows the specific prevalence of child marriage before 18 and before 15 for each of these countries and indicates the legal age of marriage and of sexual consent.

This report looks in more detail at the situation in two of Belgium's partner countries: Niger, because of its notoriously high prevalence rates, and DR Congo, because it is the partner country which receives by far the largest share of the Belgian cooperation budget.

3.2.1. Niger

Niger is the country with the highest prevalence of child and forced marriage. UNFPA data show little to no change since 1998 (77%). Prevalence is highest in the south of the country, specifically the Diffa Region (89%), the Zinder Region (88%), the Maradi Region (87%) and the Tahoua Region (83%). In the Zinder and Diffa Regions, the median age at marriage is 14.7 years (UNFPA Child Marriage Profile). In some regions of Niger, children as young as 10 are already married; after the age of 25 only a handful are still unmarried. In certain regions, child and forced marriage is part of a wider range of gender-based violations: a slavery practice that allows men to buy any woman they wish (*Wahaya*: woman is considered as a slave), female genital mutilation, force-feeding[9], repudiation[10], etc. At International forums, Niger has made public statements condemning harmful practices towards women (e.g. during the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March 2013). But at home, the public debate is extremely limited with hardly any substantial policy changes related to child and forced marriage. More recently, UNICEF (INS-Niger & UNICEF, 2014, p. 60) points to some positive dynamics at the community level, for example, in terms of the overall awareness and willingness to start finding solutions to tackle this practice.

Niger ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1999. According to Oxfam (2006), at the time Niger's parliament expressed strong reservations about article 16 of the convention at the inception of marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution by divorce or death. Niger has never brought its national legislation into line with this international agreement. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has repeatedly demanded that the government of Niger "indicate the concrete measures implemented, or planned, to curb the practice of early marriage", but to no avail. The 2011 national debate about a new Code of Family project, which aims to promote more gender equity in the country, is a good illustration of the taboos around gender, and child and forced marriage. The code was written but then faced strong opposition from conservative religious political parties and authorities. The draft was finally abandoned and the prime minister publicly stated (IPS, March 2011) that adoption was never planned or supported by the government (*Conseil suprême pour la restauration de la démocratie*). Similar dynamics have been observed against another draft law aimed at the protection of girls in school ("*Loi Portant protection de la jeune fille en cours de scolarité*", 2012). This draft law contained a number of articles responding directly to issues of child marriage and pregnancies. For example, the law would have obliged school principals to report early pregnancies or marriages and forbidden the exclusion of girls who marry early or become pregnant from the education system. Lastly, it provided a range of actors (girls, parents, school principals, human rights organizations, religious or traditional leaders) the right to file complaints related to child and forced marriage. Here again, some radical Islamic organizations took strong positions against this project and pushed parliamentarians to ask the social affairs commission to revise it before it could be resubmitted to the parliament (*Le Sahel*, 2012).

9 Forced feeding of brides (including young girls) practiced by some population groups (particularly in western Niger) as fatter girls are considered more attractive to potential husbands (INS-Niger & UNICEF, 2008).

10 Repudiation is defined as the unilateral decision made by the husband to end the marriage. Repudiation often results in the social exclusion of the woman or the loss of contact with her children (Oxfam, 2006).

Girls promoting the '18+ Ending Child Marriages in Southern Africa' campaign in Mozambique

© Photo: Plan

As a donor country, in Niger Belgium has been active in the related area of gender and family planning, but with no specific focus on child and forced marriage. Another program of institutional support to the ministry of population, women and child protection began in 2012. Among other activities, this program supported the elaboration of a strategic plan for the period 2012-2015 with the support of Belgian Technical Cooperation. The plan acknowledges the persistence of harmful practices against women (child marriage, FGM, a high early school dropout rate among girls), but no explicit policy priorities for child and forced marriage have been included in the plan.

While efforts have been made at different levels to address child and forced marriage, they tend to be blocked by specific groups in society at the final decision making stage or during implementation, or they end up not being enforced. And Belgium, as a development partner of Niger, is missing opportunities to integrate components related to child and forced marriage in its programs.

3.2.2. Democratic Republic of Congo

Child and forced marriage does not have a high priority in the cooperation programs between DR Congo and the international community, but it is a widespread practice in the country. Data from 2010 show that around 39% of women aged 20-24 were married/in union before the age of 18. This practice does not seem to be changing, with little or no difference in the UNFPA data since 2007 (39%). The regions with the highest prevalence are Katanga (50%) and Orientale (50%), followed by Kasai Occidental (48%), Equateur (48%), Kasai Oriental (48%), Maniema (46%), Nord Kivu (39%), South Kivu (38%), Bas Congo (28%), Bandundu (27%) and lastly Kinshasa (18%). As in other countries, poverty and low levels of education are risk factors. Fifty-four percent of women aged 20-24 with no education and 50% with only primary education were married or in union at the age of 18. This contrasts with just 23% of women with secondary education or higher. At the policy level, the Family Code (*Code de la Famille*; art. 351-352) states that both spouses must express their consent separately. However, the law sets differentiated age levels: the minimum age for marriage for men is 18, whereas it is 15 for women.

Bearing in mind this high prevalence, evidence for child and forced marriage in DR Congo is far from anecdotal. However, it is particularly difficult to find studies or research providing further information on the dynamics underlying the practice in DR Congo, including the situation in the provinces. To a certain extent, on the international and national agenda the issue of child marriage seems to be overshadowed by the issue of gender-based violence, which especially affects women in the provinces where there is armed conflict (Eastern Congo). In 2013, in association with UNFPA the ministry of gender, family and childhood published a report on the scale of sexual violence in DR Congo in 2011-2012 (*Ministère du Genre, de la Famille et de l'Enfance/UNFPA, 2013*). This report documents 10,322 reported incidents of sexual of gender-based vio-

lence in 2011 and 15,654 in 2012 across seven provinces[11]. The report distinguishes 3 types of sexual and gender-based violence: rapes, sexual assault and other forms of violence including psychological violence, physical assault or forced marriage. In the provinces surveyed, rape accounted for 90% of sexual and gender-based violence incident reports in 2011 and 82% in 2012. Sexual assaults accounted for 5% in 2011 and 7% in 2013, and other forms for 5% in 2011 and 11% in 2012. Remarkably, the specific issue of child and forced marriage is not included in the report as a particular category, nor is it documented in any detail in the survey.

From a legal perspective, however, DR Congo has taken some steps. In 2006, the high level of gender-violence led the government to adopt laws amending the penal code and making forced marriage illegal (Laws 06/018 and 06/019). The laws provide for prison terms of between one and twelve years and set substantial fines for all persons exercising parental or tutorial authority who force a person under their responsibility into marriage. This fine is doubled if the person forced into marriage is under 18. While the adoption of these laws constitutes progress, it has remained largely unenforced to date (Free the Slaves, 2013).

To conclude, child and forced marriage is a major societal challenge in DR Congo, but is not on the radar of the international community active in DR Congo and is given low priority at national level. The issue appears to be overshadowed by other major gender-related development problems in DR Congo, which are perceived to be of greater importance.

3.3. Context is key

An important consideration when making concluding remarks about the situation in Niger and DR Congo is that they are both fragile states[12]. The striking poverty levels are a key driver of child and forced marriage, and the weak state apparatus limits the capacity to develop comprehensive responses to this situation and enforce them on the ground.

Niger is a landlocked country ranked last (186/186) on the 2013 Human Development Index. The country faces a recurrent food crisis and periods of political instability. Over the past few years, the general political instability in the Sahel region has aggravated the situation, with thousands of refugees from Mali and Nigeria in particular seeking shelter in Niger. The fragile state of DR Congo has multiple roots, including decades of internal and external conflict over natural resources, and regional/geopolitical instability. Furthermore, the government is not capable of exercising full control over this vast and diverse country, characterized by many power alliances and struggles at all levels.

Child and forced marriage is a huge issue in both countries. But from the brief overview in this report, it is clearly not treated as such at the national and international level. The government of DR Congo has taken some steps to amend its laws to cover cases of child and forced marriage, but all in all national and international governments and NGOs appear to underestimate or deny how widespread this is. When they focus on gender, most attention is given to gender-based violence in conflict zones.

For Niger, with its sorry history of high prevalence, the issue is officially recognized at local and international level. Non-governmental actors denounce the practice and take action locally. Attempts have been made to amend laws on a regular basis, but no visible progress has been made so far. Despite the impasse in policy and law making, and the strong opposition of influential religious leaders, it is interesting to note that the fight against child and forced marriage is gradually gaining traction in public debates. This is proven by its regular inclusion on the agenda of parliament's social affairs commission and by the round-tables publicly organized by national NGOs. Taking a stance against this harmful social norm at community level is a positive development bearing in mind the long-standing taboo.

Beyond these shared characteristics as fragile states and theaters of ongoing conflict, the comparison between Niger and RD Congo also sheds light on key differences between the two. In Niger religious leaders have a major influence on societal issues like child and forced marriage. Their role is widely acknowledged and to a certain extent institutionalized in Niger. This influence is less pronounced in DR Congo, probably because of the enormous diversity in expressions of religion in DR Congo and 'new awakening church' phenomenon. It does not mean that the religious factor has no influence in DR Congo, but there are fewer signs that it plays a strong role like in Niger.

As we will find out in the next chapter, these two cases show the extent to which a good understanding of intra-national dynamics (behind the national statistics in each country) is required to develop tailored strategies rather than generic intervention models to tackle child and forced marriage.

11 Bandundu, Bas Congo, Katanga, Kinshasa, North Kivu, Orientale and South Kivu

12 A fragile country is defined as a country that has "weak capacity to carry out basic governance functions, and lacks the ability to develop mutually constructive relations with society. Fragile states are also more vulnerable to internal or external shocks such as economic crises or natural disasters" (OECD, 2012).

> **"In DR Congo (2010), 1,189,000 women aged 20-24 were in union before age 18. If present trends continue, 2,033,000 of the young girls born between 2005 and 2010 will be married/in union before age 18 by 2030 ."**
>
> **(UNFPA, 2012)**

Rita, 17, Nepal, has to take care of her two-month-old baby while doing all the housework. Her parents could not wait for their marriage as they feared having to pay a large dowry to the boy's family. Early marriage is prevalent in their community.

4. Tackling child and forced marriage: critical success factors

In the two previous chapters, we discussed the complex and sensitive nature of child and forced marriage, as well as its high prevalence in several partner countries of Belgium. In this chapter we approach the issue from a programmatic perspective: how and to what extent can development agencies help tackle this problem? The chapter draws on lessons learned from interventions implemented and evaluated in various parts of the world.

4.1. Does it disappear automatically as a consequence of development?

While it has not been high on the development agenda in most countries historically, the first formal attempts to tackle child marriage can be traced back to as early as the 1920s in India with the Child Marriage Restraint Act (known as the Sarda Act). The law was finally adopted in 1929 under pressure from a number of militant women's organizations (Mukherjee, 2009). There were also legal reforms in the 1970s and 1980s in countries like Bangladesh, India and Indonesia. While these reforms are important, there was a growing awareness over time that they were inadequate as a measure to change the practice of child and forced marriage. However it was only several decades later, in the 1990s, that the first wave of programmatic interventions directly or indirectly targeting the multiple causes of child and forced marriage were launched. This really got going after the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and the UN International Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (Malhotra et al., 2011).

In addition, considering the extent of the issue and its dramatic impact on girls' lives, it is surprising that only a few of these programmatic interventions are primarily focused on child marriage. In a systematic review commissioned by the World Health Organization, Lee-Rife, Malhotra et al. (2012) identified 23 interventions implemented between 1973 and 2009. Only five of these interventions were primarily focused on child marriage. A more recent survey in 16 West-African countries in 2000-2011 (Walker, 2013) identified 111 interventions implemented by national governments, international development partners or national NGOs. Only 10 of those interventions were primarily focused on child and forced marriage and were monitored by means of specific indicators, such as the attitudes or behaviors related to child marriage before and after the interventions. Unfortunately, in these studies little time was spent investigating the reasons for the lack of targeted interventions.

Based on her interviews with West-African policymakers and bureaucrats, Walker points out that this issue was perceived not to require a public policy intervention because "child marriage was indeed hidden but accepted and considered to be a natural rite of passage within societies" (Walker, 2014, p. 22). However, there are reasons to qualify this rather strong statement. For example, research shows that compliance of individuals, families or communities with certain social norms should not be confused with acceptance of the corresponding practices. In some cases, parents feel obliged to marry out or betroth their girl at young age but would prefer not to do so if the social pressure or the perceived risk were not so high.

One explanation for the lack of attention for child and forced marriage is the deeply rooted but hidden belief in the development community that it will disappear by itself when developing countries join the 'developed world'. By this reasoning, poverty levels first need to drop and communities need to become literate. As a result, more girls will finish secondary school and the 'backward' practice ›

© Photo: Plan

Geeta, 15 years old, has an eight-month-old baby boy. She was married while studying in grade five. She said that she was not aware of the age at which a girl may legally get married. (The legal age for marriage is Nepal is 18 for girls, and 20 for boys.)

of child and forced marriage will gradually end. The proponents of this view refer to the situation in Europe several decades ago, when child and forced marriages was still a reality to a significant degree. While studies do indeed point to the importance of poverty as one of the key drivers, this 'rising tide' reasoning overlooks a range of other drivers that have played a crucial role, such as the social movements to change how gender is seen in Europe. It also tends to ignore the great socio-cultural and historical differences between countries. In a review of the literature, no studies could be found that analyze whether and under which conditions economic development leads to the reduction and elimination of child and forced marriage. However, the slow changes in prevalence rates in a number of countries that have experienced economic growth indicate that there is no automatic link between the two.

Another reason for the lack of interventions explicitly focused on tackling child and forced marriage might be the private nature of the issue. Given that marriage is connected to such topics as sex and household and community economics, people tend to be reluctant to even discuss the issue privately, let alone with strangers. Furthermore, the negative connotation of child marriage ('early' or 'forced') can be perceived as stigmatizing in communities that have a different perception, which does not necessarily create a favorable setting for interventions. Sensitivity provides an additional explanation for why NGOs or other development actors prefer to tackle the topic indirectly and sometimes even implicitly. Most of the interventions in the review study were programs on reproductive health, education and gender that only indirectly referenced child and forced marriage as an issue they could help combat by means of prevention or mitigation.

A screening[13] of programs implemented by Belgian NGOs in partner countries[14] with a prevalence rate above 30% leads us to the same conclusion. Belgian NGOs like DISOP, Doctors Without Borders, Doctors of the World, MEMISA, Oxfam Solidarity, Plan Belgium, UNICEF Belgium, VVOB, Vredeseilanden, Via Don Bosco or *Le Monde Selon Les Femmes* work on addressing the drivers of child marriage or tackling the impact of child marriage, most often without explicit objectives. The majority also lacks a detailed theory of change demonstrating how and to what extent their action could specifically contribute to tackling the issue. The same can be said for the Belgian bilateral channel, which implies that the Belgian aid landscape does not differ from the international landscape when it comes to child and forced marriage.

13 This screening was based on information compiled on the NGO-Openboek.be and the www.viungo.net websites, complemented with information from NGO websites. (key-words: "child marriage", "women empowerment", "gender-based violence", "sexual and reproductive health", "girls education", "children rights").

14 Niger, Mali, DR Congo, Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania, Benin

4.2. How can child marriage be tackled?

The literature shows that key international organizations[15] and specialized NGOs[16] are quite convergent in their strategies on how child marriage should be tackled, especially in terms of the required domains and themes that need to be targeted to achieve long-term change. Their views and strategies are inspired by findings from a well-known set of evaluations, studies and reviews. As was discussed in earlier paragraphs, evidence continues to come from a rather limited number of interventions that have been evaluated and studied. This material is complemented with findings from programs on related issues (female genital mutilation, gender equity, female empowerment, etc.). Those related topics have obvious links with child marriage and share common characteristics, such as being influenced by social norms, patriarchal systems and a lack of vision on alternative ways to behave or act.

The main domains and themes in which consensus has gradually been built are listed in the table below. The table is structured around the key actors in child and forced marriage, from the girls themselves all the way up to international organizations that work on this theme. This actor-centered focus is based on the assumption that each actor can be seen as a potential agent of change. How they decide, act or interact with other groups – or the capacity they have to do so – can, in the short term, make a difference in the life of married and unmarried girls, and more fundamentally, contribute to eliminating child and forced marriage in the long term.

15 UNFPA, World Health Organization, UNICEF in particular
16 Plan International, ICRW, Girls Not Brides, IPPF

Table 4: Impact Areas and Strategies

Actors	Sector(s)	Domains of change / strategies
Girls and adolescents (married or unmarried)	Education	• Being listened to and heard • Being protected from dropping out of school, and getting married or becoming pregnant • Guaranteeing financial and physical access to high-quality education • Ensuring completion of primary and secondary education and access to technical and vocational training • Having awareness raised of the harmful effects of child marriage • Being protected against violence (safety on school premises, alert systems, punishing offenders) • Including sensitization around gender equity and stereotypes
	Economics	• Benefiting from access to jobs or other economic opportunities
	Rights	• Benefiting from information on girls' rights • Having access to justice with legal assistance
	Health care	• Benefiting from information on and access to health care and reproductive health services adapted to young girls and boys • Providing high-quality services and maternal health services • Providing psychological assistance to married girls
	Social	• Being encouraged and feeling confident to engage in associations and other socialization networks and to take a leadership position
Family	Social	• Participating in awareness raising and discussions on changing social norms, including alternative visions on female stereotypes, marriage, free consent and other gender-inequality issues • Registering child birth
	Economics	• Providing economic incentives and policies to not marry off their children (free education, free health care, cash, social protection)
Community		• Supporting the development of long term economic opportunities • Awareness raising and discussions on changing social norms • Supporting capacity development of local community-based organizations and leaders so they can address child marriage in their own communities
Civil Society		• Supporting CSOs to conduct national and regional advocacy campaign on child and forced marriage • Supporting advocacy efforts to develop and finance social policies contributing to gender equity

Table 4 (continued)

Actors	Sector(s)	Domains of change / strategies
Moral authorities and leaders		• Raising awareness of the impact of child and forced marriage • Encouraging moral authorities to take a public position on child and forced marriage and promoting the value of delaying marriage
Media		• Supporting the enabling environment with the aim of allowing public debates on child and forced marriage, child protection and gender equity
Authorities	Rights	• Supporting legislative change related to the legal age of marriage (same for boys and girls) • Supporting access to legal assistance for all citizens and adolescent girls in particular • Passing and enforcing laws that link child labor, child mobility, trafficking and early marriage • Supporting advocacy campaigns to ratify/comply with international conventions
	Policy and institutions	• Raising awareness among and training government officials (all levels, all sectors) with regard to child and forced marriage, social norms and the impact of harmful social norms • Supporting campaigns related to compulsory education, access to health and reproductive health care services, birth registration • Enforcing youth employment policies and improving concerted action among ministries of labor, education, social affairs and finance • Forming and implementing sustainable policies enabling universal access to social services • Building capacity at institutions responsible for enforcing laws on child marriage or related issues and raising awareness among and training staff • Supporting children and gender-sensitive reviews of existing policies and institutions • Facilitating cross-sectoral approaches (also on budget issues)
International and supranational organizations	Rights	• Supporting the country to strengthen human rights instruments to monitor gender inequity and child protection • Supporting the enforcement of international conventions by national authorities
	Social and Economic	• Supporting the formation and long-term financing of national social and economic policies that could contribute to ending child marriage (social protection, child prevention, gender, health services, etc.)

Framework on the authors based on the following sources: Jensen & Thornton, 2003; IPPF, 2007; Malhotra et al., 2011; Lee-Rife, Malhotra et al, 2012; Davies et al., 2013; UNFPA, 2013; Walker, 2014.

> **"Education is highly associated with the prevalence of child marriage in Niger. 81% of women aged 20–24 with no education and 63% with primary education were married or in union at age 18, compared to only 17% of women with secondary education or higher."**
>
> **(UNFPA, 2012)**

The table shows the range of domains that need to be considered to be able to address the multiple causes that shape the perpetuation of child and forced marriage.

However, the identification of these domains or levels of intervention is not the most difficult part. The complexity makes itself felt in the design stage, when a custom selection needs to be made from the many options to suit a given context, often based on limited research on the situation in the country and limited resources.

Lee-Rife, Malhotra et al. (2012, p. 297) distinguished three categories of approach in a review of programs explicitly addressing early marriage (as main or secondary focus). Their first category, the *horizontal approach*, is manifested in programs characterized by a combination of (at least two) strategies tackling different drivers of child and forced marriage and targeting different kinds of actors (from individual girls to policymakers). The second category, the *vertical approach*, is manifested in programs that address child marriage from a more peripheral perspective, focusing interventions on a specific driver of child and forced marriage, mainly related to poverty (cash payments, micro-finance, economic opportunities) or education. The third category, the *activist approach*, is manifested in programs focusing on national advocacy and legislation efforts or broad-based regionally targeted community mobilization.

Lee-Rife, Malhotra et al. (2012) noted several strengths and limitations in the first two categories. They point out that the single focus of vertical programs (one single driver of child marriage, single strategy and/or single sector) often facilitates implementation. These programs also have the capacity to reach large numbers of beneficiaries (girls, families). However, one of the weaknesses of such programs is their lack of focus on involving communities or their reliance on existing social dynamics or institutions. Specifically, they most often do not support communities to critically reflect on the social norms underlying child marriage, and are therefore limited in their capacity to foster sustainable behavior changes. Because of their multi-level and multi-sectoral approaches, horizontal programs are relatively difficult to implement, especially with the limited resources and time-frames that characterize development programs. They often lack an institutionalization component, which undermines the sustainability of their impact. For instance, they tend to work on education issues but without strong interaction with the education system itself, which means that structural barriers affecting girls' schooling are not likely to be addressed. As such, they do not automatically create a school environment that helps combat child and forced marriage.

Despite these limits, horizontal approaches are considered by these authors and by many NGOs and international organizations to be the most promising. Considering the integrated nature of the problem of child and forced marriage, there is indeed little chance that the practice will ever be ended by the superposition of programs focusing on one type of actor, one objective, one strategy or one small geographical area. It requires comprehensive and multi-level interventions that articulate various strategies at the same time. But as stated above, setting up horizontal programs can be particularly difficult. The more intervention domains that need to be coordinated, the more strategies combined and the more actors involved, the more complex the design and implementation of an intervention becomes. This does not fit in with the preference in the aid system for straightforward, linear interventions.

Box 4: Ethiopia – Reducing very early child marriage

Berhane Hewan in Ethiopia is one of the first and one of the few programs primarily focusing on child marriage that has been rigorously evaluated (Lee-Rife et al., 2012). Set up between 2004 and 2005, Berhane Hewan was a program of the Ethiopia Ministry of Youth and Sport and the Amhara Regional Youth Bureau in partnership with UNFPA, with technical assistance from the Population Council.

The program targeted married and unmarried girls between 10 and 19 years of age. The overall goal of Berhane Hewan was to establish appropriate and effective mechanisms to protect and support girls at risk of forced early marriage and married adolescent girls. Specific objectives included: 1) reducing the prevalence of early, child marriage among adolescent girls; 2) creating safe social spaces for the most vulnerable and isolated girls, including access to education, and 3) increasing use of reproductive health services among sexually experienced girls. The intervention included three components: 1) social mobilization and group formation by adult female mentors, 2) participation in non-formal education and livelihood training for out-of-school girls or support to remain in school, and 3) 'community conversations' to engage the community at large in a dialogue on key issues, including early marriage, and collective problem-solving (Erulkar & Muthengi, 2007).

The baseline study was carried out in early 2004 before the start of the program and the end-line survey took place in 2006 in the experimental and control areas. The evaluation of this program showed that it succeeded in reducing very early child marriage (girls aged 10-14) but found that older girls (15-19) were significantly more likely to be married than those in the control villages. This suggested that the program helped delay very early marriage but only until later childhood.

Source: Erulkar & Muthengi, 2007 and Lee-Rife et al., 2012.

4.3 Challenges and opportunities to address child marriage

The difficulty of bringing about social change in the area of child and forced marriage should not deter the international community from trying. It is neither unthinkable nor unfeasible to address child and forced marriage operationally and politically through sets of interventions. In the following paragraph, we point out some of the challenges that need to be considered in terms of complexity as well as other specific requirements to be met when addressing this issue. Illustrative examples of how these challenges can be overcome are provided throughout the text.

4.3.1. Enforcing local, national and regional advocacy

Advocacy campaigns can be an important tool in the fight against child and forced marriage. When carried out at the local, national and sometimes regional or even international level, such campaigns ideally target various types of leaders and authority figures whose stance or decisions can help end child and forced marriage. These campaigns are often coordinated by the local or national grassroots and by NGOs such as women's organizations, child protection organizations or human rights organizations. Their strength lies in the combination of in-depth knowledge of the issue and close relations with communities, making them a strategic ally when addressing this sensitive issue. However, in some countries, these activist organizations often lack the necessary influence that would make them a credible interlocutor for high-level government leaders or other strategic authorities, which hinders their capacity to initiate a broad public debate on the issue. At the national level, the involvement of strong and influential organizations (NGOs or other national organizations) in alliance with other actors is key to creating a broad-based movement for social transformation. In practice, such alliances can be slow and difficult to set up because the participating organizations are expected to create ties outside their "natural" networks. As Walker (2014) explains, in the case of Nigeria, a lot of opportunities to help eradicate child and forced marriage have been missed due to a tendency for organizations to concentrate on their own field. In her analysis, the women's rights and the education for all are two strong movements that should have already joined forces on this issue a long time ago.

As in the recent cases of Niger, Yemen and Iraq, the opposition against amendments to laws and policies that tackle child and forced marriage comes from moral or religious movements, which are often fairly radical in their position or interpretation of religious texts. In Niger, for instance, such movements are felt to have a strong influence on policy-makers because they share the same social networks and to some extent similar personal beliefs. By contradicting them they risk losing support and status in society. In that sense, the involvement of representatives of more nuanced or progressive parts of these moral movements, for example in multi-stakeholder alliances (constituted by a range of actors in society), can be a way to address this aspect of the decision making process.

Box 5: BRAC, an NGO leader of national alliance against child marriage

The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee was set up in 1972. It has been active in a number of areas (including health, water & sanitation and women's empowerment) through various strategies such as service delivery (schools, clinics, family planning, training, and micro-finance), advocacy and lobbying. BRAC is currently active in a dozen of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America and is recognized as one of largest development organizations in the world.
For over 40 years BRAC has provided assistance and support services to millions of people in Bangladesh. On occasions it has even been seen as an alternative "state" alongside the actual state. Focusing on the most vulnerable groups in society, BRAC has always highlighted gender equity as one of its core principles, translated into a number of specific strategies for girls of all ages. As member of the Girls Not Brides network, BRAC has built a national alliance with 12 international and Bangladeshi organizations[15] to end child marriage. Formally launched in September 2013 this alliance led to the first national round-table on the issue. In a country where 66% of women are married before the age of 18 and 32% before their 15th birthday, this no small feat. During the ceremony, BRAC's vice-chairperson stated that child marriage is one of the biggest social problems in Bangladesh[16]. Led by an organization that is part of the daily life of many Bangladeshi and is perceived as a moral authority in the country, this young alliance is in a strong position to engage in dialogue on child and forced marriage with local communities and governmental authorities.

15 BLAST, CARE Bangladesh, Family Planning Association of Bangladesh, ICDDRB, Marie Stops Bangladesh, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum, Plan Bangladesh, Population Council, White Ribbon Campaign, World Vision, and Youth Forum Promoting Access to Development.
16 http://gender.brac.net/news-a-media/2013-03-11-03-50-20/179-brac-forms-national-alliance-to-eradicate-child-marriage

Ahjatu, Ghana, dropped out of school when she discovered she was pregnant. In Africa, girls often miss school because of household chores, lack of financial means, teen pregnancy and other barriers.

© Photo: Nyani Quarmyne

Using the authority of regional and other supra-national authorities of countries affected by child and forced marriage can also be a crucial lever. The recent call to action by the African Union, which launched a campaign to end child marriage in May 2014 (see Box 6), is a good example of an initiative that deserves to have more resonance among other actors in the domain. Because of the supra-national nature of the African Union, national authorities and policymakers will probably feel more comfortable engaging collectively than doing so on their own at the national level.

Box 6: African Union campaign to end child marriage

In May 2014, the African Union launched its first-ever campaign to end child marriage in Africa. Organized in partnership with UNICEF and UNFPA, this two-year campaign works to accelerate change across the continent by encouraging African governments to develop strategies to raise awareness and address the harmful impacts of child marriage. The African Union's commission has already identified a number of strategies, including supporting policy and action in the protection and promotion of human rights, mobilizing awareness at continent level of child marriage, removing barriers to and bottlenecks in law enforcement, and determining the socio-economic impact of child marriage. The call to action revolves around capacity development in African Union policy organs, in order to provide technical assistance, and in member states.

Source: African Union Commission (2014), Campaign to end child marriage: call to action. http://sa.au.int/en/sites/default/files/FINAL%2011%20REVISED%20DOC%20ON%20ENDING%20CHILD%20MARRIAGE%20WITH%20ALL%20INPUTS-%20CLEAN%20COPY.pdf

Sabita, 16, Nepal, with her eight-month-old baby boy. Her father was ill, forcing her to leave school and get married at the early age of 14.

4.3.2. Addressing harmful social norms

The problem of child and forced marriage is deeply rooted in social norms (see chapter 1). Compliance with these norms is perpetuated by gender inequality and strengthened by the social and economic challenges many poor households and communities face. Supporting processes of social change – such as ending child and forced marriage – requires a deep understanding of both the psychological and structural drivers of social norms (Marcus, 2014).

Addressing harmful social norms through programmatic interventions is possible but only under certain conditions. First, in most cases significant social change cannot be achieved within the short time-frames (3-5 years) of operational interventions supported by external donors. This reality needs to be accepted and strategies, monitoring and evaluations systems adapted correspondingly. For instance, it is particularly important to work with local actors (authorities, NGOs, etc.) that not only have the capacity to instigate such a process of social change, but also to continue it beyond the scope of the intervention. Such processes also gain in credibility and influence when they are not too narrowly associated with external interventions. For instance, setting-up "local committees" in the framework of a project in order to facilitate or organize sensitization processes can undermine the gradual process towards reflection on and ownership of this issue because the committee (even when set up by strong leaders) will be mainly perceived as a temporary project instrument, which can undermine its expected functions of sustainability and influence. Secondly, it is important to combine strategies targeting harmful social norms with strategies tackling other structural or socio-economic drivers of child marriage (such as education, health care and poverty). Such complementary strategies will allow families and communities to explore new options (like not marrying off a daughter at a young age), without facing the risk of being ostracized by the community or other families.

Not only local dynamics but also outside actors and the wider environment play a role. The law, media and moral authorities all help shape social norms. It is impossible – especially within the framework of a single intervention – to control or even influence all these channels and forces. But some will need to be addressed to avoid a situation where changes at the micro-level are overshadowed by processes at other levels, due to problematic media-coverage, for instance. Identifying such actors and forces in the wider environment has to be part of the design of any intervention and integrated in its theory of change.

4.3.3. Developing comprehensive sector approaches and enabling cross-sector interaction

Sectoral interventions, such as those in health or education as well as elsewhere, are particularly relevant to child and forced marriage efforts, for several reasons. They offer the opportunity to influence other actors than families and communities, to tackle structural drivers of child marriage and to combine both preventive and mitigating approaches. Key sectors are education, health/reproductive health, employment and social affairs.

The design of interventions through sectoral entry points requires a particularly comprehensive approach in order to be effective, create synergies and achieved sustainable outcomes. For instance, establishing specialized medical services to take care of girls facing medical issues caused by child and forced marriage (fistula, complicated pregnancies, maternal and newborn mortality, etc.) is relevant and indispensable to mitigate the consequences of child marriage. But the efforts invested at this level will have limited effects if they are not associated with other kinds of support, for health centers that do not offer such specialized facilities, for instance. In their case, working on the information and attitudes of health care staff (including during

Box 7: Addressing harmful social norms in Yemen

It is estimated that about 50% of all Yemeni girls are married by age 17. In addition, 14% are married by age 14, and in some rural communities girls as young as 9 are betrothed (Al-Shargaby, 2005; Sawalha Freij, 2010). "Integrated Action on Poverty and Early Marriage" was a program run by Oxfam UK in 2005-2009 aimed at reducing the practice of child marriage by enhancing the economic opportunities of women by means of advocacy, micro-leasing and business development services (Pedersen et al., 2008). During the program a campaign was implemented at the regional governorate level to raise awareness among grandparents, parents and youths about the consequences of child marriage. At the national level the goal of the campaign was to promote the introduction of a legal age of marriage. These campaigns were run in partnership with a network of 17 local organizations (Shima Network for combating violence against women). The preparation and implementation of this campaign met with great opposition, mainly from religious leaders. The evaluation of the program now shows that changing the term "early age of marriage" to "safe age of marriage" was a key to improving acceptance of the campaign, especially in local communities. The use of the term "safe" enabled dialogue on what could be considered to be a "safe" age for marriage, rather than starting from a negative perspective that girls were married off too early.

Lamana, 17, Cameroon, was forced to marry when she was just 15 years old. She was frequently beaten by her husband and eventually fled home to her parents after a particularly brutal attack. Lamana received help from a local organization supported by Plan and was finally able to return to school.

© Photo: Plan / Igor Sapina

their training as nurses or doctors) who are likely to encounter such cases might have less visible results in the short term (from an external donor perspective), but will result in significant outcomes in the long term.

In the case of education, Walker (2014) points out that a comprehensive approach would require working simultaneously on the organization of the education sector, the quality of education, the content and pedagogical aspects of the curricula, awareness raising of teachers and school staff, sensitization on affective and sexual health and gender-equity, organization of the schools and premises (hygiene, transport), adaptation of school's internal rules, security and reporting mechanisms, etc. Of course, not all interventions have the capacity to address this wide a range of issues but it does highlight the importance of not being limited to only one domain or one strategy without making links to other factors that affect the wellbeing and future of girls.

From a programmatic perspective, it is also important to allow cross-sector approaches or at least the involvement of actors from other sectors. Working exclusively on one sector could give the impression to other actors that child and forced marriage is less of their concern. In West Africa, policymakers and actors of the education sector tend to think that early marriage is more of a health concern because it is related to sexual and reproductive health issues and should therefore be funded by health sector actors (Walker, 2014). Such a recommendation may appear obvious, but the daily implementation of child marriage interventions is often hindered by these kinds of budgetary or institutional issues. Cross-sector opportunities should therefore be integrated in the design and modalities of interventions. For instance, when preparing an intervention managed by a certain development agency in partnership with the ministry of health it must be possible to provide for direct support from and/or involvement of other actors (social affairs, social protection, education, public transport), even if these depend on other administrations or hierarchical decision-making processes.

Lastly, regardless of the sector, the focus on child and forced marriage should also be used to encourage the involved sectoral actors to conduct a critical gender-based analysis of their own principles, functioning and policies in order to determine the broader contribution the sector could make to tackle the underlying reasons for gender-based inequality.

4.3.4. Combining economic empowerment with social policies

Poverty and child marriage are deeply interlinked (see table 1 in chapter 3). In almost all countries, most of girls that marry before they turn 18 are from poor families. The economic and financial factor is clearly identified as

a driver of the perpetuation of this practice. Consequently, supporting economic empowerment is a relevant strategy to contribute to the eradication of child and forced marriage. Combined with sensitization on the harmful character of child marriage, it can stimulate norm-challenging behavior by eradicating the financial reasons for early marriage. Economic empowerment can be pursued through skills development, diversification of activities, improved access to markets, access to credit, etc. Making the families beneficiaries of such programs may give them incentives to prevent or delay marriage, whereas making the girls themselves beneficiaries may increase their financial autonomy in the household or their opportunity to avoid such a marriage.

Such support can be provided within the framework of a program focusing directly on the issue of child and forced marriage, as well as through programs addressing communities or women's economic empowerment. Both cases offer relevant opportunities. In each case, the design of the strategies has to take into account that the poorest and least educated families, for whom not complying with the norm is a social and economic risk, are most affected by early marriage. The well-being and emancipation of girls engaged in economic activity should also be at the center of programmatic interventions. However, the potential negative consequences for girls of being engaged in economic activities have to be considered by the programmatic intervention so they can be prevented or mitigated. As Greene (2014, p. 12) argues, girls engaged in economic activity face the risk of the "second shift" because, as well as being in paid employment they also have to do all their household duties. In addition, interventions should take into account and monitor the higher risk faced by girls who work of being exposed to violence (domestic violence, violence at the workplace, etc.).

Well-designed programmatic interventions addressing economic aspects should not be envisaged without corresponding social and economic public policies, in the field of employment, small and medium enterprises, health care and education, for instance. In the long term, such policies will be used to tackle the drivers of discrimination, inequality and vulnerability that explain the persistence of child and forced marriage. Among other things, the added value of social protection policies should be given special consideration. Over the past decade or so social protection systems have been undergoing reform in many countries, so there are new opportunities to widen their scope. Furthermore, the specific orientation of social protection policies towards preventing and mitigating life-cycle risks through social and economic mechanisms makes them particularly relevant to addressing the risk that girls face of being married off at young age.

Child marriage and early motherhood is a prevalent problem in Bangladesh. Rajbanu had her first child when she was barely 14 years old. At the age of 21, Rajbanu is already mother to four daughters.
"It is hard work but they are my children. I have to wake up at 6am and work all day until midnight. But I have no choice. If my marriage had not taken place, I could study. Now I have so many duties, I can only stay at home. I don't go out, because I can't."

© Photo: Plan / Bernice Wong

4.3.5. Adapting approaches to fragile/conflict regions

The international responses to gender issues in DR Congo show that child and forced marriage is low on the list of priorities compared to other gender-related issues. The challenge is linking efforts against gender-based violence related to conflicts to the struggle against child and forced marriage, as a permanent phenomenon that affects women. This link is important because fighting gender-based violence exclusively from a conflict-driven perspective can divert attention away from the more structural roots of such violence. Gender-based violence is often more strongly addressed when it takes place in the context of a conflict and is perpetrated by external "enemies" than when it is part of regular daily life, and therefore needs to be addressed urgently. At the same time, there is a risk that responses do not consider the amplifying effects of conflict and extreme poverty on permanent forms of gender inequality, such as child and forced marriage.

From the literature it is clear that insecurity, acute poverty and disaster increase both the risks and consequences of child and forced marriage (as a protective mechanisms or survival strategy; IPPF, 2007 2013). In particular failing health, education and legal protection systems leave girls without any adequate support. The insights into strategies to tackle and mitigate the consequences of child and forced marriage in these complex and sensitive environments remain limited. In a recent report on the situation of girls in fragile states, World Vision (2013) recommends the mainstreaming of child and forced marriage prevention into emergency and humanitarian responses. The report suggests that "joining up humanitarian responses to development initiatives that seek to tackle violence against women and girls in contexts of crises will help to ensure that in contexts of greater stress, families have alternative means of protecting their children instead of resorting to early marriage".

4.3.6. Monitoring and evaluating changes related to child and forced marriage

Very few programmatic interventions have been systematically evaluated (Lee-Rife et al., 2013). And approaches that tackle child and forced marriage more indirectly through education or improved livelihood often do not measure child marriage as an outcome (Walker, 2013). As Greene observed (2014), the monitoring and evaluation of child marriage faces several challenges. For example, the narrow time-frame of interventions makes it difficult to know whether girls remain unmarried until age 18. It is also difficult to examine how delaying their marriage impacted their lives. In addition, Greene (2014, p. 12) notes that "traditions and practices associated with child marriage in a particular setting may intensify or reduce the impact of the practice in that setting. This harkens back to the point about whether it is possible to disassociate or de-link other practices from

child marriage, like leaving school or becoming pregnant early in life, to reduce their impact on the lives of girls". These challenges call for an increased effort in coming-up with innovative ways of organizing monitoring and evaluation.

In theory, three levels of outcome monitoring could at least be considered (Plan Asia Regional Office, 2013b):

- Demographic level: changes related to maternal morbidity/mortality, violence against women and girls, school enrollment of girls, and gender equity
- Societal norms: percentage of women aged 20 to 24 who were first married before they turned 18
- Behavioral change in an enabling environment: girls and young women are valued; girls and young women are empowered to make choices, improvement in the position of stakeholders at community and governmental levels (access to paid work; decision making ability, access to resources, choices of marriage partner and timing of marriage)

Sustainable changes at the demographic and societal levels are likely not observable in the limited time-frame of a program. Indicators related to child marriage as proxies (e.g. maternal morbidity, level of education) or a specific indicator on child marriage (age at first marriage) should be fully integrated in demographic and health surveys and closely monitored by national authorities in charge of this question.

Also in the short or medium term, the development of social norms related to child marriage can be monitored. However, Lee-Rife et al. (2012, p. 300) emphasize that such short-term outcomes should not be over-interpreted, as it remains unclear whether change in individual attitudes automatically results in norm shifting in the long term. These authors suggest that "because of this potential gap between attitudes and norms, and their implication for sustaining behavior change, [..] programs should collect more extensive evidence regarding how norms operate in target communities and how programs may have influenced them." For programs working through sectoral approaches (e.g. education, health care) the behavioral changes (birth registration, rate of girls completing primary and secondary schools, reintegration of married girls, etc.) observed at the individual and community levels can be used as proxies for the developments in child marriage.

More generally, the monitoring of behavioral changes can be guided by innovative methods like Most Significant Change (Davis and Darts, 2005), Collective Impact (Kania & Kramer, 2011, suggested by Lee-Rife et al., 2012) or Outcome Mapping (Earl et al., 2001). Such methods are particularly relevant to observing signs and paths of change in terms of decision-making processes (incl. policies), practices, relations between actors, etc. Some of these methods (such as Outcome Mapping) are also suitable for monitoring institutions, organizations or groups of actors (such as religious leaders) whose position and decisions related to child and forced marriage can contribute to profound social changes.

As stated in the paragraph on economic empowerment, intervention monitoring and evaluation systems should also consider the potential negative effects that social change or new opportunities can have for the girls themselves and their families, such as social exclusion, conflicts, stigmatization and increased exposure to violence.

Box 8: A mobile application to support reporting of violence against children

In Kenya, Plan has supported the development of a mobile application that can be used to report violence against children in Kilifi County. At 48%, Kilifi county has the highest prevalence of child marriage in Kenya.

Since April 2014, volunteer Plan Children Officers report cases of child abuse in their family or in the community through the VurguMapper (meaning Mapping of Violence Against Children in local language) application on their mobile phone. The message is sent to the police, the children's department and hospitals where the recipients have to verify the complaint by contacting the reporter.

Between April and June 2014, 68% of the 69 reported cases of child violence affected females and 32% affected males. Neglect accounted for 56.6% of reported cases, sexual abuse 23% and child pregnancy 14%.

In June 2014, Plan Kenya announced that it would continue to work with the Kenyan Government to support the use of communication technology for development purposes.

Source: http://plan-international.org/where-we-work/africa/kenya/about-plan/news/mobile-app-enhances-reporting-of-child-abuse-cases

A teenage girl addresses a village meeting in Ghana on the importance of girls' education.

5. Belgian aid and child and forced marriage: beyond the status quo

Previous paragraphs have demonstrated that child and forced marriage is not a marginal practice in at least seven of Belgium's 18 partner countries. It is a widespread societal practice with major developmental implications.

The impact goes far beyond the devastating impact on girl brides; it also has far reaching consequences for families, communities and society as a whole. Insights into how to confront this deeply rooted practice remain limited, but chapter 4 raises a set of promising approaches that have proven their effectiveness in the past. If carefully designed and implemented mainly by local governmental and civil society actors, there may be a role for external development agencies, for example in facilitating the promotion of girls' rights.

The starting point of this chapter is the finding that the international donor community is increasingly, albeit still hesitantly, responding to this crisis. The emerging insights from recent comprehensive evaluation work are used to map Belgium's aid to fight gender inequalities, but the topic of child and forced marriage is addressed only to a limited degree by Belgian development agencies. In this chapter clarification is sought for this and a number of structural obstacles to and opportunities for a stronger engagement with this topic within the Belgian aid system are examined. This forms the basis for a set of recommendations for Belgian lawmakers, policymakers, and other leading actors in the Belgian development sector (NGOs and academics in particular). Some of these recommendations are low hanging fruit, being rather easy to implement with no real justification for not doing so. Other recommendations require more out-of the box thinking, more serious engagement, but potentially offer substantial rewards.

5.1. Child and forced marriage emerging on the international agenda

In their comprehensive historical overview of the presence of child and forced marriage in UN mechanisms and instruments, Plan International (2013) observes both a substantial increase in references and a drive towards a more effective terminology.

The mapping shows in detail how this theme is gradually gaining traction in UN treaties, conventions, declarations, resolutions and reports. The number of high level events dedicated to child marriage is also increasing, such as the 2012 International Day of the Girl, the June 2014 UN Panel on preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage during the 26th session of the Human Rights Council, and the July 2014 international event hosted by the UK government on tackling female genital mutilation (FGM) and child and forced marriage.

In terms of how the issue is framed internationally, the study by Plan International (2013) shows a move away from seeing child and forced marriage as something that has problematic side effects on other areas of development (health, economy) to a core theme. As a consequence, there is a growing consensus that this needs to be addressed from a rights-based perspective, that it requires concerted efforts and therefore needs to be placed higher on the international agenda. In terms of the terminology and the language used, too, there is a shift from using 'early and forced marriage' to 'child marriage'. The problem with the term 'early marriage' is that it leaves significant room for a relative interpretation of the minimum age based on different cultural and religious practices. In contrast, the term 'child' is defined clearly in international law as anyone under the age of 18 years. It also enables action to be taken in the event of violations against girls.

While there is increasing international momentum at policy level, activity on the ground remains limited as described in chapters 3 and 4. There are also large differences between the different high-prevalence countries with regard to the level of international support they receive in this area, with DR Congo being left out from many international efforts. Lastly, the number of bilateral donors that show increasing interest in the topic remains relatively small, with the notable exception of USA, the UK, Canada, and the Netherlands, among others.

To conclude, it is justified to state that as long as increasing international attention for child and forced marriage is not translated into increased efforts on the ground, the problematic situation will continue to persist in many countries.

5.2. Flying under the radar of Belgian aid

Aside from minor references in thematic policies on education and agriculture, as a topic of Belgian development cooperation child and forced marriage mainly features in gender-related policies. This paragraph starts by exploring Belgian's performance in gender mainstreaming before examining activities relating to child and forced marriage in greater detail.

Gender

In their recent working paper[17], Holvoet and Inberg (2014) do a roundup of gender-related integration efforts in the Belgian development cooperation in 2002-2012. The paper provides detailed insight into the politics and institutional dynamics around gender mainstreaming in the Belgian aid system, pointing at a substantial gap between policies and implementation. The study includes an analysis of the G(ender) -marker[18] coding of 17,575 interventions that received Belgian ODA in 2002-2012, in combination with semi-structured interviews, an electronic survey, and a desk study.

The authors acknowledge the fact that Belgium has shown commitment to gender issues at the policy level, including the integration of gender into the 1999 and 2013 laws on development cooperation. Similarly, there have been efforts to develop institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming at the ministry responsible for development cooperation (DGD) and at the bilateral implementing agency, Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC). There are gender desks at both organizations and gender has been integrated in policy notes on different sectors, such as agriculture, health, and education. Gender is also expected to feature systematically in the policy dialogue on new cooperation programs (Indicative Cooperation Program, ICP).

At the operational level, BTC procedures demand that the gender dimensions of projects and programs be screened in the identification and formulation phase. There is also some monitoring of attention given to gender in new programs by means of the Gender-marker coding system, and the gender budget scan tool. More recently, BTC has made additional efforts to integrate gender in evaluations, and there are plans to strengthen gender mainstreaming in the context of its new monitoring and evaluation system (MoRe Results).

Despite all these efforts, the authors observe limited progress in gender mainstreaming. They identify a problem they describe as 'policy evaporation', referring to an actual gap between the policies and related instruments, on the one hand, and the actual progress at the operational level, on the other. This finding seems to be corroborated by field staff and head office staff at DGD and BTC, and by NGO staff, academics and other related stakeholders[19]. Aside from absent human and organizational capacities, and lack of time, BTC and DGD staff members lack hands-on gender mainstreaming tools and especially guidance on the use of these tools.

In addition, the gender desks are small and are not always managing to respond to the needs of the field. There is also some confusion about roles and responsibilities. The capacity is also hampered by that fact that the gender desks at DGD and BTC have recently been given lower positions in the hierarchy. Respondents also complain that cooperation between the desks is too ad-hoc. Lastly, there are too few incentives at all levels at DGD and BTC to take gender seriously. The current set of procedures does not contain hard incentives that can be used to hold managers and field staff accountable. Soft incentives, such as sharing good practices, have been planned for, but the general perception of staff is that this has not been implemented to a sufficient degree.

As a consequence, the actual gender mainstreaming practice seems to be exclusively focused on activities for women (the old 'Women in Development' approach), while there is an international consensus on the need for a 'Gender and Development' approach (GAD), which focuses on gender relations and includes men in the equation. The GAD approach "emphasizes the importance of the social-cultural construction of gender, which determines the needs, rights, obligations and opportunities of men and women... (It) departs from the idea that interventions in all thematic areas and on all levels (global, macro, meso and micro) are influenced by existing structural features (like gender) in societies" (Holvoet et al., 2014, p. 6).

This frame of analysis is translated in operational terms by means of what is often described as the 'two-track approach': a gender mainstreaming approach and gender specific programs. The first track involves the systematic mainstreaming of gender in the analysis and formation of all policies, programs and projects. The second track contains interventions that focus specifically on gender, which try to change the underlying gender structures in areas that are strongly regulated by gender norms.

Observing that the Belgian aid system is not really progressing on the ground towards GAD and the corresponding two-track approach, the authors conclude that there are hints of "a more fundamental flow in the underlying theory of gender mainstreaming" (Holvoet et al. 2014, p. 35) in the Belgian aid system. The theory of change for gender mainstreaming builds on certain assumptions that do not seem to hold water. For example, the mere existence of policies and tools, together with lightweight gender desks, supported by some training activities, has proved inadequate to really change the practice on the ground.
Important opportunities to reverse this situation, according to the authors, are the new 2013 Law on Development Cooperation, which has reduced the transversal themes from four (gender, environment, social economy and children rights) to two (gender and environment), increasing the likelihood that the remaining two themes will be handled more systematically. Along similar lines, the 2007 Law on Gender Mainstreaming recently led to a Gender Mainstreaming Task Force being set up, with its own budget and structures, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This might give a new impulse to gender-related programming.

17 This working paper is a spin-off from an ongoing comprehensive evaluation of gender mainstreaming activities in the various Belgian development cooperation channels by South Research and IOB (University of Antwerp, Belgium).
18 Gender-marker coding was developed by OECD-DAC to facilitate the monitoring of DAC member activities on gender equality. It includes the coding of interventions according to three values (G-2, G-1, G-0) depending on whether gender equality is the main objective, a side objective or not an objective at all. The system has several limitations but it does enable (superficial) gender budget analysis.
19 A survey (n=100) of staff members of DGD, BTC, NGO, academics and other stakeholders shows that only 31% of respondents think that gender issues are adequately addressed in the implementation of projects and programs. This was also reiterated in interviews.

Rani with her husband, step mother-in-law and father-in-law carrying her baby, Bangladesh. Rani was married at age 11 which was made possible by defrauding her ID card to say she was 18.

© Photo: Plan / Bernice Wong

Child and forced marriage

The findings on how Belgian aid is dealing with gender in general are somewhat replicated for child and forced marriage, although the number of specific policies and strategies is even more limited. However, there is no two-track approach here either and strategies seem to focus more on girls than on addressing the underlying social norms at family and community level.

In chapter 1 we gave an overview of the laws and policies relevant to child and forced marriage in Belgian development cooperation. While the topic features in key policy documents and in some sectoral policy notes of DGD (see Box 9), it is most often simply mentioned as a context factor without presenting detailed objectives and strategies to tackle the issue. Programs that focus on the retention or intake of girls in basic and secondary education are (implicitly) expected to help combat child and forced marriage. Similarly, programs that raise the income of poor families try to prevent child and forced marriage for economic reasons. There are no specialized programs with clearly articulated intervention strategies in this area, no specific targets, and no monitoring or evaluation systems to track progress regarding child and forced marriage.

The situation at Belgian NGOs is similar to some degree. As indicated earlier, a range of NGOs have projects and programs that directly or indirectly deal with girls and gender issues in partner countries with a high prevalence of married girls. While some Belgian NGOs have worked or have plans to work more explicitly in this area, there are few specialized programs and the starting point of most interventions is the indirect effects of programs targeting girls

BOX 9: Child forced marriage in Belgian development policy documents

At the Belgian level, only three strategic policy documents refer explicitly to Child and Forced Marriage "Equity between men and women" (2002), "Sexual and Reproductive Health" (2007) and "Rights of the Children" (2009). In terms of ways of action, the policy document on the rights of children mentions that Belgium should encourage partner countries "to organise, in addition to adequate legislation and the fight against immunity from prosecution, awareness campaigns amongst children, families and communities on the health risks associated with underage marriages and pregnancies, on harmful (whether or not traditional) practices like female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation and violence. The policy document on sexual and reproductive health mentions that Belgium will also ensure that "girls are informed and warned about the dangers and consequences of marriage and pregnancy at an 18 early age and that awareness-raising campaigns on this subject are conducted within communities" (pp. 16-17).

© Photo: Plan / Petterik Wiggers

Fadimata, Mali, was only 14 years old when she got married. Due to conflict she is now living in a refugee camp in Burkina Fasso with her husband and her baby. This situation is particularly difficult for a young mother.

(life skills education, access to education, community development, etc.). Those interventions could indeed produce such indirect effects but they cannot be detected as the monitoring and evaluation systems do not cover indicators or proxies related to child and forced marriage. In addition, to ensure that such interventions delay the age of marriage or protect girls from being married off before they turn 18, the projects should be designed in such a way as to allow targeting the girls that are particularly vulnerable to child and forced marriage (living areas, level of wealth, etc.).

The current situation is sub-optimal in several ways. Several partner countries have high prevalence rates of early marriage, which the international donor community should give attention to. DR Congo in particular is often overlooked in studies and programs targeting early marriage. In addition, Belgian development actors are active in areas and sectors that could accommodate components that relate to early marriage. Chapter 3 shows that it is possible to integrate components that relate to child marriage more explicitly in ongoing interventions, but again, on the condition that their designs are based on good knowledge of the specific dynamics of child and forced marriage in the region/country and of an analysis of the specific contribution the actors involved in the ongoing interventions could play in this specific issue.

In addition, while Belgian research institutes and technical agencies have only limited experience in child marriage, some have an international reputation in related fields that are highly relevant for tackling child marriage. For example, the work on sexual and reproductive health at the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp and the International Center of Reproductive Health in Ghent is closely related. Along similar lines, the expertise of institutes or NGOs such as Plan Belgium, *Le Monde Selon les Femmes* and the Marriage and Migration Network also ties in very well with the type of expertise needed.

It can be concluded that child and forced marriage is still a blind spot in the Belgian development cooperation. Many opportunities are missed to integrate more explicit components with regard to child and forced marriage in existing projects and programs, and in policy work at the international level.

5.3. Belgian aid and early marriage: making a difference

This paragraph examines a number of policy options and scenarios to ensure a deeper, more rewarding engagement with the issue of early marriage in the Belgian partner countries and in international forums. The recommendations take as their starting point the current set-up, limitations and opportunities of the Belgian aid system. Some recommendations may be seen as low hanging fruits requiring minimal efforts to achieve, while still having the potential to contribute to the eradication of child and forced marriage. Other recommendations present a more ambitious agenda, in which Belgium advocates specific types of interventions and/or interventions in specific geographic regions.

After introducing a general recommendation for the Belgian development community, the report suggests specific recommendations for different types of Belgian actors and decision making levels.

5.3.1 General recommendations

Recommendation 1: Strengthening the knowledge base

The Belgian development cooperation operates in several countries with a high prevalence of child and forced marriage, but there is limited awareness in the bilateral channel or among NGOs about this topic. Aside from the fact that it is not on the radar, there is also limited expertise at headquarters or in the field. Thematic desks at DGD and BTC and NGOs tend to be manned by staff with expertise in traditional areas such as health and agriculture. In terms of child and forced marriage capacity is almost non-existent. This also means that the complexity and sensitivity of child and forced marriage as an issue is likely to deter DGD attachés and other field staff as they cannot rely on in-house expertise. In addition, the topic does not appear in the high-level interactions between Belgium and the partner country. DGD and BTC staff members indicate that local policy makers do not put it on the joint policy dialogue agenda, so it is not addressed in new indicative cooperation programs (ICP: see also 4.3.6).

At the same time, the practice of child marriage negatively affects other parts of the Belgian development cooperation, such as education, health care and rural development. It has a lifelong impact on large groups of girls, their families and communities. Importantly, there are indications that it is a practice that does not automatically disappear with decreasing levels of poverty.

The first step is increasing the knowledge base of the Belgian development community and other stakeholders. This could be done by setting up awareness raising and training activities at different levels for a select group of practitioners and policy makers in relevant areas, beginning with health, agriculture and education. Ideally, this would consist of a set of customized sensitization and support strategies to help these actors integrate these issues in specific programs in specific areas. Rather than one-off training sessions, an alternative set of out-of-the-box solutions might be chosen. For example, if the ministry is serious about gender mainstreaming and child and forced marriage, funding support for certain programs or geographic areas could be made dependent on the strength of the proposals in terms of how it plans to address issues of child and forced marriage. This hard incentive could be combined with more soft incentives. The ministry (or NGO umbrella structures) could support the capacity of the development agencies in this field by setting up a customized support system. Rather than generic training sessions for large groups of people, up-to-date professional strategies could be employed, such as coaching and advice at the workplace. This specialized support could be provided through a pool of international consultants working on an ad-hoc basis. Examples include helping organizations integrate child and force marriage components in their interventions in the health sector or coming up with relevant sets of indicators for child and forced marriage or designing appropriate multi-sectoral approaches. Clearly, this would require funding, but studies on capacity development processes show that workplace-based personalized support is more effective than traditional training workshops at building up the knowledge base at organizations.

> “In sub-Saharan African, nearly two out of five (37 per cent) of young women aged 20-24 were married by their 18th birthday. Niger (75 per cent) has the highest prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa.”
>
> (UNFPA, 2012)

5.3.2. At the diplomatic level

Recommendation 2: Integrating child and forced marriage in the Indicative Cooperation Program high-level discussions

Child and forced marriage is not a policy priority in any of the ongoing Indicative Cooperation Programs of the seven high-prevalence partner countries[20]. However, several arguments for taking this issue more seriously are presented in the study.

As stated above (see Box 9), the strategic paper "Respect of the Rights of Children" suggested that Belgium should encourage partner countries to address child and forced marriage, especially from a health perspective. The 2013 UN Resolution on Child, Early and Forced Marriage provides a framework for Belgian initiatives to engage in bilateral discussions on this issue with the partner countries. Progress is also being made in the partner countries, which provide another opportunity to raise the issue in policy dialogues. For example, we noted in chapter 3 that countries like Niger are taking public positions on the issue of child and forced marriage in international forums. And DR Congo has strengthened part of its legislation on this issue. While child and forced marriages might appear to be a sensitive topic in diplomatic-level discussions, the public positions or engagements mentioned above provide a window of opportunity for Belgian diplomatic activities. This could be the start of a dialogue to incorporate this topic in ICP negotiations.

20 Niger (2009-2011), Mali (2010-2013), Mozambique (2009-2012), Uganda (2012-2016), Tanzania (2010-2013), Benin (2008-2011)

Recommendation 3: Putting child and forced marriage on the Post-2015 Agenda

The current discussions on the Post-2015 Development Agenda offer important opportunities to harness the new momentum on child and forced marriage to create a common development agenda. Belgium can play an enabling role in making this happen.

The Open Working Group of the UN General Assembly[21] has taken steps in that direction by proposing the inclusion of child and forced marriage as one of the main issues to be tackled in the Post-2015 Agenda. Their working paper presented in May 2014, proposes the inclusion of a specific target to end child, early and forced marriage by 2030 through focus area 5 on gender and women's empowerment[22]. However, the June 2014 zero draft of their report adopted a more general target to 'eliminate all harmful practices, including child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations' and the 2030 time-frame was removed[23].

Late 2014 and early 2015 will be a decisive period in the discussions on the Post-2015 Agenda. During these discussions, Belgium diplomacy could support the adoption of specific targets and indicators related to child and forced marriage as well as what we know are important drivers (education of girls, extreme poverty) to tackle the issue.

21 The Open Working Group of the General Assembly was established in January 2013 and is tasked with preparing a proposal on SDGs. The Open Working Group comprises 70 member states from the five UN regional groups (http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/ending-child-early-forced-marriage-post-2015-development-agenda-open-working-group-sustainable-development-goals/).
22 http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/3686Workingdoc.pdf
23 http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/ending-child-early-forced-marriage-post-2015-development-agenda-open-working-group-sustainable-development-goals/)

> "An estimated 70 million girls in sub-Saharan Africa are at risk of being married in the next two decades (by 2030)."
>
> (UNFPA, 2012)

Fatmata, Plan youth delegate from Sierra Leone, speaking at Plan International's panel on Early and Forced Marriage, New Tork, USA.

© Photo: Plan / Bernice Wong

Girls attending a Kishori Prerna Manch (KPM) meeting in Lunkaransar, Rajasthan, India. The project continues the education of girls returning from the Balika Shivir residential education camps with life skills training and helps them create peer support groups.

5.3.3. At the policy level

Recommendation 4: Reviving the Belgian gender strategies with the case of child and forced marriage

Belgium has initiated a range of policies and strategies on gender mainstreaming over the past few years. It has built up supporting structures and invested in tools and mapping instruments. At the same time, specialists are critical about the extent to which Belgium has really managed to transform its gender mainstreaming approach to contribute to gender equality in a substantial way.

Rather than developing further generic tools and broad guidelines, what seems to be missing is hands-on gender mainstreaming expertise for specific topics in specific sectors. This expertise can be built up gradually by working on and documenting specific examples of successful gender mainstreaming interventions or approaches, and capacitating Belgian actors in that process (see also recommendation 1).

Child and forced marriage could be one of those sub-themes in which Belgian actors build up a knowledge base. Working on child and forced marriage is a difficult undertaking but it is highly relevant and has the potential to achieve large developmental gains. Through targeted investments, Belgium could attract expertise in this area, develop and document a number of learning-oriented cases and initiate research to examine specific aspects or drivers of child and forced marriage. This would allow missed opportunities with regard to child and forced marriage to be explored in new and existing programs, as well as reviving the ongoing gender work, and creating new momentum.

Reinforcing gender strategies also implies revisiting the incentive system to get gender mainstreaming higher up the agenda at DGD, BTC and the NGOs. The review study of the gender mainstreaming activities of the Belgian development cooperation (Holvoet & Inberg, 2014) concludes that both hard and soft incentives are lacking, preventing gender equality from taking root in the practices of the aid community. Hard incentives include clear targets and corresponding accountability measures to make policy makers and practitioners more accountable for their choices in addressing gender inequality in their programs. Soft incentives are about building the space and practices for more knowledge sharing between practitioners and others in this area. Child and forced marriage could be a useful testing ground to try out a more systematic set of hard and soft incentives at different levels of the aid system. Inspiration can be found in recent gender mainstreaming policies and strategies by different international bodies. One example is the new gender and age marker put forward by the EU for use in humanitarian settings. This entails funding being gradually oriented to programs that have a transformative approach to gender mainstreaming rather than simply fulfilling basic gender requirements. In this framework, if a program is considered gender blind it will no longer receive funding. This hard incentive could make a real difference in the Belgian aid system. It would require internal capacity building within the DGD to develop a strong set of procedures and support tools to assess and monitor the performance of organizations in this area.

> **"We cannot down play or neglect the harmful practice of child marriage as it has long term and devastating effects on these girls whose health is at risk and at worst leading to death due to child birth and other complications."**
>
> **(Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission - Addis Ababa, May 2014)**

Recommendation 5: Making child and forced marriage an overriding concern in selected Belgian partner countries

Several policy priorities of the Belgian Cooperation (i.e children's rights, social protection, decent work) offer particularly relevant windows of opportunities to design and implement interventions related to child and forced marriage with partner countries, particularly from a prevention perspective. It would also make sense to address the issue in the upcoming 'common context analysis' for Belgian Non Governmental Organizations working in the Global South.

Children's Rights

The new law (2013) on development cooperation has reaffirmed Belgium's commitment to children's rights by identifying human rights as a thematic priority (art 11; § 1). Child and forced marriage was included in Belgium's strategic paper on children's rights as early as in 2002 but this was based on a rather limited sectoral approach (health) and did not consider the many other options that Belgian priority sectors of intervention could offer in order to strengthen the commitment to children's rights in general and child and forced marriage issue in particular. As we showed in the previous chapter, sectoral approaches can be especially relevant to addressing child and forced marriage, as this issue is driven by multiple factors.
One way of beginning to implement this priority would be to revisit the strategic paper on children's rights in order to address the issue of child and forced marriage more comprehensively.

Social Protection and Decent Work

Belgium development cooperation supports the efforts of civil society actors and partner countries in the field of social protection (particularly regarding access to health care) and decent work (including social dialogue, workers' rights and job creation) through all its cooperation channels (multilateral, governmental and non-governmental). Belgium development actors have also built strong expertise in these domains. The new law on development cooperation reaffirms and formalizes that long-standing, consistent engagement of the Belgium Development Cooperation.

Eliminating child and forced marriage in a sustainable way does not only require projects focused on economic opportunities or safety nets to poor households. In the long term, whether a family chooses to marry off a daughter will also depend on policies that guarantee rights to effective social protection mechanisms. From that perspective, Belgium's commitments to implement universal social protection systems are a very good starting point for a dialogue with partner countries on how social protection mechanisms could structurally contribute to the elimination of child and forced marriage.
Within the Decent Work thematic priority, the job creation component also offers opportunities to address what appears to be one of the major challenges of the coming decade, youth employment in developing countries. Belgium is already active in this field, with support for a youth employment program in the Katanga region of DR Congo (2012-2015 PAEJK project implemented by the International Labor Organization). The decent work thematic priority gives the Belgian government a great opportunity to explore how supporting policies and programs in that area could contribute to tackle the factors that lead to child and forced marriages.


© Photo: Carey Nash

5.3.4. At the operational level

Recommendation 6: Designing programs addressing child and forced marriage

At the operational level, the first recommendation is that an explicit intervention logic (theories of change) is needed to address child and forced marriage, whatever the chosen approaches (horizontal, vertical, or lobbying and advocacy). These theories of change should demonstrate how and to what extent the intervention will effectively contribute to achieving changes affecting the drivers of child and forced marriage.

The review of literature also points at a number of conditions that have to be in place in order to increase the relevance and prospects of a real contribution on this issue. From a programmatic perspective, experience shows that it is often difficult to ensure that these conditions are fulfilled because of existing limitations in the design process (lack of in-depth analysis) and the implementation arrangements. However, this does not mean that working on child and forced marriage is necessarily more difficult or resource consuming than other issues. It just means that the design of support interventions should be primarily centered on the needs and requirements of the issue rather than the constraints of existing aid arrangements. Stronger program design potentially leads to better and sustainable outcomes.

Addressing child and forced marriage in a programmatic intervention should of course also be translated into implementation tools, such as the logical framework, budget and planning, monitoring and evaluation systems.

Children learning at Abraham Valdelomar school, located in Laderas community, Puente Piedra district, Peru.

Recommendation 7: Laying the foundations for a truly multi-sectoral and multi-actor approach

Chapter 3 showed that some of the more promising avenues for working on early marriage interface with such sectors as health and education, or education and employment. Ideally, this work will be combined with strategies targeting different actors and levels, from the family/community level to the decision making level. This is a major challenge for the development community because there is a tendency to work in unconnected sectors and few organizations operate in more than one or two sectors.

Belgium could facilitate the exchange between experts in these sectors and pilot a number of interventions to gradually expand the knowledge base. A practical example is provided below.

Over the past few years, relevant expert networks have been set-up in Belgium in health and education sectors. The Be-cause health network brings together a wide range of development experts and practitioners working on different aspects of international health care. It is a vibrant community with a wide scope for action. Actors working in the education and training sector in developing countries have a similar platform in EDUCAID. Work on child and forced marriage could be a highly effective way to build bridges between the two communities. If they could be brought together around the specific challenge of eradicating child marriage, with access to seed money for innovative pilot projects, a structural interaction between sectors could be created. Similar activities could be launched between networks in other sectors.

While it would be tempting for DGD to look at the Belgian NGOs to add this topic to their portfolio, the findings of chapter 3 suggest that early marriage cannot be addressed through the actions of civil society alone. This requires responses at different levels from different types of actors. It is a field with a greater likelihood of synergies between the agendas of the bilateral channel and other actors. This could lead to meaningful types of cooperation between local and Belgian actors.

Regina, 15, Sierra Leone, was forced to leave school after her brother refused to pay for her exams because she refused to get married. Though she's now back to school she still fears that she may be forced to marry soon.

© Photo: Plan

Recommendation 8: Working with the latest insights in social norms to achieve sustainable change

Changing social norms and behavior with regard to child and forced marriage is a standard example of what literature terms an inter-dependent human practice, involving strong socially prescribed behavior. The choice made by one person depends on the choice of the second person, whose choice depends, in turn, on the choice of the first person. In a larger group this implies that the choice of each person depends on the choice of all persons (Mackie et al., 2012). People might want to adopt different behaviors but they know that if they are the only one in the community to marry their daughter at a later age, they could lose their position in the community and it could bring shame on the family. They may also fear that their daughter will become unmarriageable, as she will be considered "old". This finding has important implications for programs that want to bring about change in this area. Studies show that at least three types of changes need to take place (Mackie et al., 2012, p. 7):

- *Individual attitudes change*: there are enough people ready to change, and
- *Common knowledge*: those who are ready to change know that enough other people are ready to change, and
- *Coordination*: they do so together.

Current programs tend to have unrealistic assumptions of how training activities can lead to behavioral change in families and communities. Insights in the dynamics described above can lead to approaches that take into account the difficulty of changing deeply rooted social norms.

> **"We must do away with child marriage. Girls who end up as brides at a tender age are coerced into having children while they are children themselves."**
>
> **(Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson African Union Commission - International Conference on Family Planning, Addis Ababa, November 2013)**

Recommendation 9: Responding to the child and forced marriage gap in DR Congo

This report concludes that DR Congo is often overlooked in research and programs that tackle child and forced marriage. Most activities under the gender umbrella in DR Congo target gender-based violence as a consequence of the brutality of warring groups against women in eastern Congo. At the same time, child marriage is a widespread reality across DR Congo, and its devastating effects are similar to the systematic rapes in the Kivu region. Interestingly, relevant national legislation regarding this issue already exists and it has a vital role to play in building support among policy makers and the general public. However, first and foremost there is a gap in our knowledge of child marriage in DR Congo in terms of basic data, but also in terms of the underlying drivers, trends and possible solutions. Secondly, there is a need to develop appropriate responses that take into account the fragile state of the country, its weakness at various levels, the complex relationship with neighboring countries, etc.

As a major donor in DR Congo active in relevant areas such as education, agriculture and health, Belgium could consider advocating a more proactive approach to child and forced marriage in DR Congo.

© Photo: Plan

The Sultan van Dosso, one of the four highest level traditional leaders in Niger, West Afrika.

Recommendation 10: Introducing child and forced marriage in the partnership with Niger

In a country like Niger where three in every four girls are married before the age of 18, there are innumerable reasons to help eradicate this harmful practice. Belgium could play various roles in this.

It is shocking that no specific in-depth study on child marriage exists for Niger, the country with the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world. Such a study is indispensable to improve our understanding of how and why this practice has become so widespread and continues to thrive, broken down by region or populations group. By facilitating such a study, the Belgian development cooperation would add to its own knowledge but above all it would enhance the knowledge of national stakeholders (including NGOs) who often take action on this issue based on their own personal knowledge, particular cases or stereotypes (especially with regard to marginalized nomad groups) rather than evidence-based information. The study would also offer the opportunity to create dialogue on the issue as well as providing new information and insights.

As we described above, while proposed amendments to laws and policies with regard to child marriage are subject to strong opposition, particularly from religious leaders, child marriage appears to have been the topic of public debate (including parliament's social affairs commission) more than ever before. Civil society actors have increased their advocacy efforts, encouraged by international and – now African – campaigns. Support for current advocacy efforts combined with the development of more strategic advocacy approaches (involving influential actors beyond the traditional circle of human rights/gender organizations active in this issue) could especially help create strong advocacy alliances and open dialogue on this issue.

A third option that could be explored is the integration of child and force marriage actions in the ongoing Belgian intervention sectors, rural development and health care, from both a prevention and mitigation perspective. For instance, the ongoing strategy to improve the training of health staff could offer opportunities to improve the quality of services girls are offered at medical centers when they have psychological and physical problems associated with child marriage. Such training could also raise awareness on the role that health staff should play protecting girls or preventing child and forced marriage.

Along the same lines, the institutional support provided by BTC to the ministry of population, women and child protection is a very good starting point for improving its capacity to influence the debate and providing it with support to address the issue in their own current and future strategies more explicitly (such as the strategy on gender-based violence to be finalized in late 2014).

"Our role as traditional [customary] leaders is managing the customs of the communities. Management really implies development, and development means training, education, health. For me, the issue of girls' education is paramount.

I'm 88 years old, and ever since my medical training, I have understood that marrying a young girl early at the age of 11, 12 – something that our customs allow – that a girl that age is not physically mature. She may unfortunately get pregnant, and this often ends up with surgical intervention, or with fistula. That's frequent. So it's normal that I should attempt to explain this very serious phenomenon to my population, which leaves little girls physically challenged for life. It's not only a loss for us in terms of development, but it's also a huge loss for the girl. These girls are physically and psychologically scarred for life.

As soon as one learns, in villages or in schools, of a case of child marriage, we are notified. I have my village chiefs, my customary chiefs who try to stop it. If they can't solve the problem, they come to me. That's when I summon the parents and all concerned to dissuade them. Our work is mainly dissuasion, raising awareness and explanation.

I've always said that Plan Niger does remarkable work in the Dosso region. We, like you, work to train (educate) villages. You are also trying to educate people, like us, so we complete each other. You're giving me support that I am taking with both hands."

(The Sultan of Dosso, one of only four sultans (the highest level of traditional leader) in Niger, explaining why he supports Plan's work to end child marriage.)

Recommendations to the Belgian development community

General recommendation

- **Recommendation 1:** Strengthening the knowledge base

At the diplomatic level

- **Recommendation 2:** Integrating child and forced marriage in the Indicative Cooperation program high-level discussions
- **Recommendation 3:** Putting child and forced marriage on the Post-2015 Agenda

At the policy level

- **Recommendation 4:** Reviving the Belgian gender strategies with the case of child and forced marriage
- **Recommendation 5:** Making child and forced marriage an overriding concern in selected Belgian partner countries

At the operational level

- **Recommendation 6:** Designing programs addressing child and forced marriage
- **Recommendation 7:** Laying the foundations for a truly multi-sectoral and multi-actor approach
- **Recommendation 8:** Working with the latest insights in social norms to achieve sustainable change
- **Recommendation 9:** Responding to the child and forced marriage gap in DR Congo
- **Recommendation 10:** Introducing child and forced marriage in the partnership with Niger

Mina's parents (India) wanted her to get married at the age of just 13. However she attended a children's rights group that eventually convinced her parents not to force her to marry. Since Mina escaped marriage she has continued to attend school, which she may well have dropped out of if she had married and started a family at 13.

References

- Africa Child Policy Forum (2013), *The African Report of Child Wellbeing - 2013, Towards a Greater Accountability to Africa's' Children*, Africa Child Policy Forum, Addis Ababa
- African Union (2013), *Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa: Call to Action*, December 2013, African Union, Addis Ababa
- Al Shargaby (2005), *Early Marriage in Yemen: A Baseline Study to Combat Early Marriage in Hadramout and Hudaiedah Governorates*, Gender Development Research and Studies Centre, Sana'a University
- Amin S. (2011), *Programs to address child marriage: framing the problem; promoting healthy, safe, and productive transitions to adulthood*, Brief no. 14 Updated January 2011, Population Council, New York
- Davis R. & Darts J. (2005), *The Most Significant Change technique: A guide to its use* (http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf)
- Davis, A., Postles, C. & Rosa, G., (2013), *A girl's right to say no to marriage: Working to end child marriage and keep girls in school*, Plan International
- Earl S., Carden F., Smutylo T. (2001), *Outcome Mapping: Building learning and reflection into development programs,* IDRC, Ottawa
- Ekine A., Somati M., Walker J-A. (2013), *Improving Learning Opportunities and Outcomes for Girls in Africa*, Working Paper from the 2013 Echildna Global Scholars, Center for Universal Education at Brookings, Washington.
- Equality Now (2014), *Protecting the Girl Child: Using the law to end child, early and forced marriage and related human Rights Violations*, Equality Now, New York
- Erulkar A. & Muthengi E. (2007), *Evaluation Of Berhane Hewan A Pilot Program To Promote Education & Delay Marriage in Rural Ethiopia*, Ministry of Youth, Sport a Culture (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia), UNFPA, Population Council
- Erulkar A. & Muthengi E. (2009), "Evaluation of Berhane Hewan: A Program to Delay Child Marriage in Rural Ethiopia", *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 35(1): 6–14
- Free the Slaves (2013), *Wives in Slavery: Forced Marriage in the Congo*, Free the Slaves, Washington
- Greene M. (2014), *Ending Child Marriage in a Generation: What Research is Needed?*, Ford Foundation & GreeneWorks, New York
- Heise, L. (2013), *Social Norms. Introduction*, Presentation at the Expert workshop on empowering adolescent girls, 26/4/2013, London
- Holvoet N. and Inberg L. (2014), *Belgian Development Cooperation through a Gender Lens (2002-2012)*, Working Paper/2014.03, Institute of Development Policy and Management, Antwerp, 41p.
- INS-Niger & UNICEF (2008), *Analyse de la situation des femmes et enfants au Niger*, Ministère du Plan, de l'Aménagement du Territoire et du Développement Communautaire, Niamey
- INS-Niger & UNICEF (2014), *Analyse de la situation des femmes et des enfants au Niger selon une approche basée sur l'équité et les droits humains*, Ministère du Plan, de l'Aménagement du Territoire et du Développement Communautaire, Niamey
- IPPF (2007), *Ending Child Marriage: A guide for Global Policy Action*, International Planned Parenthood Federation and Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls, London
- IPS (Ousseini I.) (2011), *Pas de Code pour la famille pour le Niger*, Avril 2011, Inter Press Service News Agency
- Jensen R. & Thorton R. (2003), "Early Female Marriage in the Developing World", *Gender and Development*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Marriage (Jul. 2003): 9-19
- Kania, J. & Kramer M. (2011), "Collective impact", *Stanford Social Innovation Review* Winter
- Le Sahel (2012), "Le mariage des enfants: sonnons l'alarme au Niger", *Sahel Dimanche*, 19 October 2012, Niamey
- Lee-Rife S., Malhotra A., Warner, A, and Glinski, AM. (2012), "What Works to Prevent Child Marriage: A Review of the Evidence", *Studies in Family Planning*, 42(4): 287-303
- Mackie G, Moneti F. Denny E. & Shakya H. (2012), *What are Social Norms? How are they measured?*, Working Paper, UNICEF/UCSD Center on Global Justice Project Cooperation Agreement.
- Mackie G. & LeJeune J. (2009), *Social Dynamics of Abandonment of Harmful Practices: a New Look at The Theory*; Special Series on Social Norms and Harmful Practice; IWP-2009-06, Innocenti Working Paper, Florence
- Malhotra A., Warner A., McGonagle A., Lee-Rife S. (2011), *Solutions to End Child Marriage: What the Evidence Shows*, International Center for Research on Women, Washington
- Marcus R., (2014), *Gender justice and social norms –processes of change for adolescent girls: Towards a conceptual framework 2*, January 2014, ODI Report, London
- Ministère de la population, de la promotion de la femme et de la protection de l'enfant (2012), *Les orientations du Plan Stratégique 2012-2015*, Document de synthèse, République du Niger, Niamey
- Ministère du Genre, de la Famille et de l'Enfant (2009), *Stratégie Nationale de lutte contre les violence basées sur le Genre*, République Démocratique du Congo, Kinshasa
- Ministère du Genre, de la Famille et de l'Enfance/UNFPA (2013), *Ampleur des violences sexuelles en RDC et actions de lutte contre le phénomène de 2011 à 2012*, Ministre du Genre, de la Famille et de l'Enfant/UNFPA, Kinshasa
- Mukherjee S. (2009), "Using the Legislative Assembly for Social Reform: the Sarda Act of 1929", *South Asia Research*, November 2006 26: 219-233

- Nguyen M. & Wodon Q. (2012), "Measuring child marriage", *Economics Bulletin*, 32: 1 (398-411)
- Nguyen M. & Wodon Q. (2012), *Global Trends in Child Marriage*, World Bank, Washington
- OECD (2012), *Fragile States: Resource Flows and Trends in a Shifting World*, DAC International Network on Conflict and Fragility, OECD, Paris
- Oxfam (2006), *Etudes sur la violence faite aux femmes en Afrique de l'Ouest*, Oxfam Québec, Montréal
- Oxfam GB (2014), *Safe Age of Marriage and Women's Economic Empowerment Project Effectiveness Review Full Technical Report*, Oxfam GB, Women's Empowerment Outcome Indicator, Oxfam GB, Oxford
- Pande R., Kurz K., Walia S., Mac Quarrie K. & Jain S. (2006), *Improving Reproductive Health of Married and Unmarried Youth in India, Evidence of Effectiveness and Costs from Community Based Interventions: Final Report of the Adolescent Health Program in India*, ICRW, Washington
- Pedersen K., Othman Mukred A.W. & Mashhour Qaid E. (2008), *Evaluation of Integrated Action on Poverty and Early Marriage: Programme in Yemen*, Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation, Oxford
- Plan Asia Regional Office (2013), *Asia Child Marriage Initiative: Summary of Research in Bangladesh, India and Nepal*, ICRW/Plan Asia Regional Office, Bangkok
- Plan Asia Regional Office (2013), *Guidance Note on Programming to End Child Marriage*, Synthesis of the Presentations and Discussions of the seminar "Effective Programme Development to Delay Child Marriage: Pathways to Stop Child Marriage in Asia, 2-4 May 2013, Plan Asia Regional Office, Bangkok
- Plan International (2013), *Submission to the Report of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Preventing and Eliminating Child, Early and Forced Marriage*, Plan International, Geneva
- Plan Liaison Offices to the United Nations (2013), *The International Legal Frameworks of Child and Forced Marriage Child and Forced Marriage at the United Nations*, Plan Liaison Offices to the United Nations, New York
- Plan WARO (2012), *Because I am a Girl 2012 - Research: Overall report. Girls' retention and performance in primary and secondary education: makers and breakers*, Plan WARO, Dakar
- Salman R. (2014), *Iraq's draft child marriage law seen as political stunt - and sign of times*, Reuters (17 April 2014)
- Sawalha Freij L. (2010), *Safe Age of Marriage in Yemen: Fostering Change in Social Norms, A case Study*, USAID/Pathfinder International
- Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery (2012), *Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences - Thematic report on servile marriage*, Human Rights Council, 21st Session, Agenda item 3 Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, 10 July 2012, General Assembly of the United Nations, New York
- Turner C. (2013), *Out of the Shadows: Child Marriage and Slavery*, Anti-Slavery International, London
- UNFPA (2012), *Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage*, UNFPA, New York
- UNFPA (2013), *Motherhood in Childhood: Facing the challenge of adolescent pregnancies*, UNFPA State of the World Population, New York
- UNGEI (2013), *Annual Report 2012*, United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
- UNICEF (2001), *Early Marriage, Child Spouses*, Innocenti Digest, n°7, UNICEF, Florence
- UNICEF (2011), *State of the World's Children 2011: Realizing the Rights of Adolescents*, UNICEF, New York
- UNICEF (2013), *State of the World's Children: Children with Disabilities*, UNICEF, New York
- UNICEF/European Union (2010), *The Dynamics of social change: towards the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting in five African countries*, UNICEF, Innocenti Research Centre, Florence
- USAID (2012), *Ending Child Marriage & Meeting the Needs of Married Children: the USAID Vision for Action*, US Agency for International Development, AID, October 2012, Washington
- Walker J-A. (2013), *Mapping Early Marriage in West Africa: A Scan of Trends, Interventions, What Works, Best Practices and the Way Forward*, Ford Foundation West Africa Office
- Walker J-A. (2013b), "Early Marriage in Africa: Trends, Harmful Effects and Interventions", *African Journal of Reproductive Health June 2012 (Special Edition)*; 16(2): 231
- Walker J-A. (2014), "Why Ending Child Marriage Needs to be an Education Goal in West Africa", in Ekine A., Somati M., Walker J-A., (2013), *Improving Learning Opportunities and Outcomes for Girls in Africa*, Working Paper from the 2013 Echildna Global Scholars, Center for Universal Education at Brookings, Washington
- Watson C. (2013), *Adolescent girls and gender justice: understanding key capabilities domains across a variety of socio-cultural settings: Lessons learned and emerging issues from year 1*, ODI Report, December 2013
- Wind-Cowie M., Cheetham Ph., Gregory Th. (2012), *Ending Forced Marriage*, Demos, London
- Women Living Under Muslim Laws (2013), *Child, Early and Forced Marriage: A Multi-Country Study - A Submission to the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OCHCR)*, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, Dakar, Lahore & London.

Plan Belgium
Galerie Ravenstein 3 B 5
1000 Brussels – Belgium

T +32 (0)2 504 60 12
F +32 (0)2 504 60 59

anthony.vanoverschelde@planbelgie.be

www.planbelgie.be

www.twitter.com/planbelgie
www.facebook.com/planfans

Since 1983 the ngo Plan Belgium, member of Plan International, has been working with and for the most vulnerable children and their communities in the Global South; tackling poverty, injustice and inequality. In 50 of the poorest countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, we create opportunities for children to claim their rights and change their future. In Belgium we raise awareness of the general public, raise funds and place the rights of the child on the agenda of schools, media and policy makers.

KU LEUVEN HIVA
RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR WORK AND SOCIETY

R.P. : Plan Belgium a.s.b.l., Dirk Van Maele, Galerie Ravenstein 3 B5, 1000 Brussels, Belgium